Routledge Grammars

INTERMEDIATE CANTONESE

A GRAMMAR AND WORKBOOK

Virginia Yip and
Stephen Matthews

INTERMEDIATE CANTONESE: A GRAMMAR AND WORKBOOK

Intermediate Cantonese is designed for learners who have achieved basic proficiency and wish to progress to more complex language. Each of the 25 units combines clear, concise grammar explanations with communicatively oriented exercises to help build confidence and fluency.

Features include:

- many authentic examples from contemporary media, including films, advertising, songs and soap operas
- clear differentiation between colloquial and more formal speech registers
- up-to-date analysis of contemporary Cantonese as spoken in Hong Kong

Suitable for independent learners and students on taught courses, *Intermediate Cantonese*, together with its sister volume, *Basic Cantonese*, forms a structured course of the essentials of Cantonese grammar.

Virginia Yip is Associate Professor at the Department of Modern Languages and Intercultural Studies, Chinese University of Hong Kong. **Stephen Matthews** is Associate Professor at the Department of Linguistics, University of Hong Kong. They are the authors of *Basic Cantonese: A Grammar and Workbook* (2000) and *Cantonese: A Comprehensive Grammar* (1994).

Titles of related interest published by Routledge:

Basic Cantonese: A Grammar and Workbook
By Virginia Yip and Stephen Matthews

Cantonese: A Comprehensive Grammar
By Stephen Matthews and Virginia Yip

Colloquial Cantonese: A Complete Language Course
By Keith S. T. Tong and Gregory James

Basic Chinese: A Grammar and Workbook
By Yip Po-Ching and Don Rimmington

Intermediate Chinese: A Grammar and Workbook
By Yip Po-Ching and Don Rimmington

Chinese: An Essential Grammar
By Yip Po-Ching and Don Rimmington

Colloquial Chinese: A Complete Language Course
By Kan Qian

Colloquial Chinese CD-ROM
By Kan Qian

Colloquial Chinese (Reprint of the first edition)
By Ping-Cheng T'ung and David E. Pollard

INTERMEDIATE CANTONESE: A GRAMMAR AND WORKBOOK

Virginia Yip and Stephen Matthews

London and New York

First published 2001
by Routledge
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

Typeset in Times by
Florence Production Ltd, Stoodleigh, Devon

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
TJ International Ltd, Padstow, Cornwall

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Yip, Virginia, 1962–
Intermediate Cantonese: a grammar and workbook/Virginia Yip and Stephen Matthews.
p. cm.
Includes index.
ISBN 0–415–19386–9 ISBN 0–415–19387–7 (pbk.)
1. Cantonese dialects–Grammar. I. Matthews, Stephen, 1963– II. Title.

PL1733 .Y565 2000
495.1'7–dc21 00–036623

ISBN 0–415–19386–9 (hbk)
ISBN 0–415–19387–7 (pbk)

For Alicia Tīn Wihng,
in celebration of a new millennium –
Chīn Hēi Lìhn

CONTENTS

	Acknowledgements	**ix**
	Introduction	**xi**
1	Consonants and vowels	1
2	Tone contours	8
3	Changed tones	13
4	Reduplication	21
5	Word formation	29
6	Verb–object compounds	35
7	Adjectives and stative verbs	41
8	Classifiers revisited	46
9	Topic and focus	55
10	Using **jēung**	61
11	Serial verbs	66
12	Aspect markers	74
13	Comparisons	83
14	Resultative and causative sentences with **dou**	89

15 Quantification 97

16 Negative sentences 107

17 Questions and answers 113

18 Relative clauses 120

19 Subordinate clauses 127

20 Conditional sentences 135

21 Reported speech 143

22 Cantonese speech conventions 149

23 Particles and interjections 156

24 Colloquial syntax 165

25 Code-mixing and loanwords 172

Key to exercises 179

Glossary of grammatical terms 195

Index 197

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Umberto Ansaldo for his input to this book as well as to *Basic Cantonese*. His suggestions both as a linguist and learner of Cantonese have led to numerous improvements, while his careful proof-reading has removed some embarrassing errors. We nevertheless take responsibility for any errors which remain. The discussion of tongue twisters and Japanese loanwords with Cream Lee and Shin Kataoka has been a timely gift to us. We thank the reviewers and the Routledge editorial team who have seen the project through.

Thanks are also due to our dear friends and colleagues who have supported us throughout the years, and to numerous Cantonese speakers who, whether under duress or inadvertently, have supplied us with lively and colourful examples. In the former category, special mention must be made of our captive informants in the Yip family: Peggy, Patrick and Linda, Dan and Kennis. In the latter category, pride of place goes to Sophie and Timothy, whose Cantonese advanced from 'basic' level to beyond the modest level of this book in the course of its writing. We hope they will all be suitably amused, or bemused, by the finished product.

Finally, we take the opportunity to pay tribute to the many men and women who have contributed to uncovering the richness of Cantonese grammar in the course of the twentieth century. Among these we feel particularly indebted to Thomas O'Melia, Y.R. Chao, Anne Yue and Samuel Cheung Hung-Nin.

INTRODUCTION

Designed as a companion volume to *Basic Cantonese*, *Intermediate Cantonese* covers further topics not introduced there, and revisits others in more detail. Following on where *Basic Cantonese* left off, the grammatical topics become more intricate and the examples more complex. The approach taken is similar: we aim to describe the structure of the language as spoken by the Cantonese people, rather than prescribing how it should be spoken. Together, the two workbooks should also make our *Cantonese: A Comprehensive Grammar* accessible to learners as a reference book.

At a more general level, this book suits any learners of Cantonese who have achieved elementary proficiency and are looking to progress to more complex language which will allow them to converse on more demanding topics: to express themselves and communicate in a more effective and sophisticated manner thoughts and feelings as well as mere information; to phrase questions politely, acknowledge compliments appropriately, apologize, complain and even make the occasional joke. Such uses of language call for the right choice of words and structures, to name just the bare essentials.

Cantonese in the twenty-first century

It should be stressed that at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Cantonese is by no means on its way out. To many minds, Putonghua seems to be gaining in status and importance at the expense of Cantonese which may be perceived to be under threat in the face of political and linguistic domination. Yet far from being an endangered language, Cantonese remains the predominant daily language in Hong Kong and is acquiring many more learners from China and around the Pacific Rim. Not only Westerners (Americans, British and Australians, Europeans) but also Asians such as Japanese, Koreans and mainland Chinese are learning Cantonese for both cultural and economic reasons.

Following the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong in 1997 and Macau in 1999 to the People's Republic of China, Putonghua has begun to be more widely used in these cities as well as in Guangdong province. Cantonese nevertheless remains as vibrant and popular as ever, spoken as a vernacular and written in various forms. Under the policy of 'one country – two systems' (**yāt gwok léuhng jai**) and the promise of 'no change for fifty years' (**ńgh-sahp lìhn bāt bin**) which guarantee a distinctive cultural profile, we expect that Cantonese will continue to thrive. Indeed, the continued and uninhibited use of Cantonese may be taken as one of the litmus tests of these pledges.

At the outset of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, official policy has been for its citizens to be trilingual (in Cantonese, Mandarin and English) and biliterate (in written Chinese and English). This is embodied in the slogan **léuhng màhn sāam yúh**, 'two written languages (**màhn**) and three spoken languages (**yúh**)'. No doubt such a multilingual policy and its success is vital to the future of Hong Kong as a commercial, cultural and technological hub of southern China and the international gateway to the rest of the world. The medium of instruction in most schools is Cantonese, following the mother-tongue education policy (**móuh-yúh gaau-hohk**) introduced in 1998. Even if this policy were changed and Cantonese replaced by Putonghua as the medium of education, it would take at least a generation for Cantonese to be superseded as the everyday language of the community. Policy apart, most speakers have an attachment to their language as a marker of identity and as a vehicle for Cantonese culture, from traditional operas and nursery rhymes to soap operas, films and songs.

Speech registers

In any language, chat among friends is relatively informal and colloquial, whereas reports and presentations at a business meeting are more formal. Just as an apology to a close friend or family member couched in a formal way will seem absurd (or comical), addressing a meeting in overly colloquial language will be badly out of place. The book therefore concludes with a series of units focusing on the differences between formal and informal speech, especially as they affect grammar.

In order to do justice to the lively and colourful character of the language, we use authentic examples wherever possible. The examples aim to illustrate how speakers use the language in real life situations as well as how the grammatical structures work. Hoping to convey a true picture of how Cantonese is used in the streets of Hong Kong, we have included examples from television advertisements, news reports, radio programmes, soap operas and films. Such authentic examples represent what ordinary

people actually speak rather than what they write. The sources of such examples are specifically indicated where they are of special interest.

Spoken Cantonese and written Chinese

Spoken Cantonese stands in a complicated relationship to Chinese writing. At the extremes, it is useful to distinguish 'High' and 'Low' Cantonese. 'High Cantonese' is the kind of language used in legal, academic and other professional contexts. It is close to standard written Chinese in grammar and vocabulary. Television news broadcasts, based on a written script but read with some spoken Cantonese features, epitomize this register. 'Low' Cantonese as used in domestic and other informal contexts is further from written Chinese, especially in terms of grammar and vocabulary: for example, comparisons are made colloquially with **gwo** rather than **béi** (see Unit 13).

It is not easy to write Cantonese as it is spoken, since there has never been a standard script and the necessary characters are lacking for many colloquial words (such as the verb in **wé-ngán** 'grab money' and the adjective **lé-he** 'clumsy', 'messy'). Writers who attempt to represent Cantonese in characters, such as journalists wishing to reflect the exact words of their interviewees, resort to various tricks such as using English letters ('D' to represent the comparative **dī**) and quasi-phonetic spelling ('mit' for **mīt** 'to tear'). Any such texts will fall foul of language purists who frown on such deviations from standard Chinese writing.

Note on exercises

Many exercises permit more than one answer, and alternative answers given in the Key are intended to be indicative rather than definitive. Words which can be left out are given in parentheses. The dagger † indicates more demanding exercises.

Using this book

This grammar and workbook aims to achieve the following for the learner of Cantonese:

i provide exposure to a slightly more advanced level of input and grammatical patterns,

ii raise the learner's metalinguistic awareness of many aspects of Cantonese grammar, and

iii help those who approach the learning of language in an analytic manner by means of explicit explanation and highlighting of difficult points.

We believe that language is inherently creative; once learners master the major rules and patterns, they will naturally use the language in a productive and creative way to come up with novel phrases of their own. We encourage active experimenting with the language and actual use of language whenever possible; hence the open-ended nature of some of the exercises. Learners who are able to consult a native speaker can check their responses and elicit alternatives. All should bear in mind that there is nothing wrong with making mistakes: indeed, Cantonese speakers are impressed when foreigners attempt their language, and they will be amused rather than offended by errors.

Finally, we hope that just as our own appreciation of Cantonese has increased by leaps and bounds as a result of much musing on its various intriguing properties and structures, so will any native or second language speaker's appreciation of the language. The grammar of Cantonese will no doubt continue to surprise and fascinate us, and hopefully our readers too.

Hong Kong, August 1999

UNIT ONE

Consonants and vowels

In this unit, we assume familiarity with the basic sounds of consonants and vowels as described in *Basic Cantonese*. Building on this base, we review some of the main difficulties and delve further into variation among these sounds. To represent sounds accurately, symbols from the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) are given in square brackets: [ʃ], for example, represents the consonant in 'shoe'.

Difficulties for English speakers

Certain Cantonese sounds pose particular difficulties for native speakers of English and, in some cases, other European languages. These include:

- Front rounded vowels: **yu** as in **syū** 'book', and **eu** as in **geuk** 'foot'
- Affricates: **j** as in **jā** 'drive', and **ch** as in **chóh** 'sit'

Rounded vowels

Rounded vowels are produced with the lips 'rounded' or pursed. In English, only the back vowels **o** as in 'hope' and **u** (as in 'who') are rounded. In Cantonese, the front vowels **yu** and **eu** are also rounded: **yu** is produced like **i**, and **eu** like **e**, with the addition of lip rounding. These vowels do not have precise equivalents in English. **yú** (fish) should not sound like English **you**, or **jeuk** (wear) like **jerk**: in each case the lips must be rounded outwards to produce the right vowel sound (pouting may help here).

eu is especially difficult since its quality varies according to the following consonant sound:

Longer, lower [œː]	*Shorter, higher* [θ]
chéung rob	**chéun** stupid

séung wish	**seuu** believe
chēung window	**chēut** go out
leuhng capacity	**leuht** rate
jēung a surname	**jēun** bottle
sèuh slide	**sèuhu** pure

Long and short diphthongs

While the short vowel **a** and the long **aa** are easily distinguished, the corresponding diphthongs can be more difficult:

Short			*Long*		
ai	**máih**	rice (uncooked)	**aai**	**máaih**	buy
	tāi	ladder		**tāai**	tyre
au	**gáu**	dog; nine	**aau**	**gáau**	manage; meddle
	làuh	leave behind		**làauh**	scoop up

In addition to the difference in length, the short diphthong **ai** is noticeably different in quality from long **aai**, much as **a** differs from **aa**. It begins with a much less open vowel and can sound almost like **ei**.

Alternative pronunciations

Alternative pronunciations of sounds (technically known as allophones) occur in certain positions. Learners should be able to recognize these and may try to produce them in appropriate places.

The vowels **i** and **u** have a different quality before the velar sounds **k** and **ng**, where they are more open than usual. Consequently they can sound like a different vowel altogether:

sihk (eat) tends to sound like **sehk** (stone)
duhk (study) tends to sound like **dohk** (to measure)
dihng (steady) tends to sound like **dehng** (to order, reserve)
sung (give) tends to sound like **song** (to lose, as in **song-sāt**)

In fact there is an uncertainty inherent in the language here, since in some cases both vowels are used for the same meaning: **sìhng** and **sèhng** 'whole', for example, are both used (**sìhng** is the more formal pronunciation, mandatory in reading a text aloud and in certain words such as **sìhng-gūng** 'succeed', while **sèhng** is colloquial).

Palatalization

The fricative 's' tends to change when followed by the rounded vowels **yu** and **eu**:

syū book	towards [ʃ] as in 'shoe'
séung want	towards [ʃ] as in 'sherbet'

Just as in English 'issue' and 'tissue' may be pronounced carefully with [s] or more casually with [ʃ], so the Cantonese 's' tends towards [ʃ] when the following vowel is **yu** or **eu**. This effect, termed palatalization, also affects the affricates **j** and **ch** before the same vowels:

jyuh to live	towards [tʃ] as in 'Jew' (but still unvoiced)
jeui most	towards [tʃ] as in 'Joe'
chyùhn whole	towards [tʃ'] as in 'choose'
chéui marry (take a wife)	towards [tʃ'] as in 'church'

Consequently, the 'ch' sound in these words resembles rather closely the English 'ch' in 'choose'. Contrast this with the usual sound of **ch**, [ts'] as in **chóh** 'sit' which should not sound like English 'chore'.

Sound changes

A further source of variation involves ongoing sound changes, whereby particular sounds are being lost or are changing.

i Initial consonants

n- becomes **l-**:	**néui** → **léui**	daughter
ng- disappears:	**ngóh** → **óh**	I
gw- becomes **g-**:	**gwok** → **gok**	country
kw- becomes **k-**:	**kwòhng** → **kòhng**	crazy

Though purists may insist on **néih** over **léih** 'you', this pronunciation is becoming rarer and rarer as the sound change takes its course. This means that the words merge with existing words with **l-**, so that **nàahm** 'south' sounds the same as **làahm** 'blue'. The form **nī** 'this' shows some resistance to the change (apparently because there are no existing syllables of the form **lī** in Cantonese) so that one hears either **nīdouh** or **līdouh** 'here'.

There is a tendency for **ng** to be lost at the beginning of a word, but many words vary:

aap or **ngaap** duck
ūk or **ngūk** house
ok or **ngok** fierce (of animals), strict (of teachers)
ōnchyùhn or **ngōnchyùhn** safe

A traditional rule of thumb which remains useful is that **ng** appears in syllables with low tones:

High and mid tones	*Low tones*
aai shout	**ngàaih** suffer
aau argue	**ngàuh** cow
Daaih On Tai O	**gīn-ngonh** proud
tóuh ō diarrhoea	**tónh ngoh** hungry

Syllables beginning with **gw** tend to become **g** especially in casual speech:

Gwóngjāu → **Góngjāu** Guangzhou (Canton)
gwok-gā → **gok-gā** nation

This change depends on the following vowel, and does not generally affect syllables with the vowel **a**:

gwa hang
gwai expensive

ii Syllabic consonants
As initial **ng-** disappears, the few words consisting of the consonant **ng** alone change to **m**:

ng becomes **m**	**ńgh mān** → **ḿh mān**	five dollars
	ngh-gáai → **mh-gáai**	misunderstanding
	Ǹgh síujé → **M̀h síujé**	Miss Ng

This change affecting the surname **Ǹgh** leads to jokes whereby, for example, the well-intended girl's name **Ǹgh Sī-Màhn** 'Grace Ng' sounds like **m̀h sīmàhn** 'not graceful'.

iii Final consonants

-ng becomes **-n**

This change is especially common after the long vowel **aa-**:

hohksāang → **hohksāan** student

Again this merger leads to more words sounding the same. For example, the word **sāang-duhng** 'lively' sounds the same as **sāan-duhng** meaning 'cave' (note that the change does not apply to **duhng** because of the different vowel). Similarly, **-t** and **-k** tend to merge so that **sāk-chē** 'congested' (traffic) sounds like **sāt-chē** 'missing car', while **bākbihn** 'north side' sounds like **bātbihn** 'inconvenient'.

Exercise 1.1

Pronounce the following pairs with particular attention to the vowels.

1	**luhk** six; green	**lohk** down
2	**muhk** wood	**mohk** curtain
3	**tùhng** go with	**tòhng** sugar
4	**gīng** pass by	**gēng** be afraid
5	**sihk** eat	**sehk** stone
6	**waih** stomach	**waaih** broken
7	**bai** close	**baai** worship
8	**māu** crouch	**māau** cat
9	**sīng** rise	**sēng** sound
10	**juhk** colloquial	**jobk** dig

Exercise 1.2

Pronounce the following pairs paying attention to the initial, final consonants and vowels.

1	**Bāt bin ge deihfōng** Unchanged places	**Bāk bihn ge deihfōng** Northern places
2	**Kéuih jūngyi choisām** She likes vegetables	**Kéuih jūngyi chèuih sāam** She likes to take off her clothes
3	**Kéuih fóngmahn-gwo yāt bun yàhn** She has interviewed half of the people	**Kéuih fóngmahn-gwo Yahtbún yàhn** She has interviewed the Japanese
4	**Jeui gìng haih léih** You're the best	**Jeui gēng haih léih** You're the most afraid
5	**Kéuih jeni lénihyán** S/he's most like a woman	**Kéuih jēui léuihyán** S/he chases after women

Exercise 1.3

Pronounce the following 'tongue twisters' widely circulated among Cantonese speakers, paying attention to the initial and final consonants. Begin slowly before gradually increasing speed.

1 **Jā sihdīk daap dīksí heui sihdō sihk dōsí**
Hold a stick take a taxi to go to the store to eat toast
2 **Yahp sahtyihmsāt gam gán-gāp-jai**
Go into the laboratory and press the emergency button
3 **Mahkdōnghùhng daai Mahkdōng-nàh heui Mahkdōnglòuh sihk maht-tòhng lōu dōnggwāi**
Mak Dong Hung takes Madonna to MacDonalds to eat honey mixed with **donggui** (Chinese medicine) (from the film **Gāmjī yuhkyihp** 'He's a woman, she's a man')
4 **Gwaht gām gwaht gāt gwaht gāi gwāt**
Dig gold, dig orange, dig chicken bone
5 **Chèuhng gok-lōk-táu bahng gān gām gwan**
(*lit.* wall corner head leaning a gold rod)
A gold rod leans against the wall in the corner
6 **A-Chēung heui gāaisíh máaih yùh-chéung, gin dóu yìh-jéung, gūkgūng yìh-jéung, dit-jó yùh-chéung, yìh-jéung bōng a-Chēung jāp fāan fu yùh-chéung**
A-Tseung went to market to buy fish intestine, see uncle, bow to uncle, fish intestine falls down, uncle helps A-Tseung to pick up fish intestine
7 **Yāt mān máaih gān gāi, yāt mān máaih gān gwāi, gāai tàuh máaih gān gāi,**
(*lit.* one dollar buy catty chicken, one dollar buy catty turtle, street end buy catty chicken,
gāai méih máaih gān gwāi, gaugíng gāi gwai dihng gwāi gwai?
street end buy catty turtle, actually chicken expensive or turtle expensive)
Buy a catty of chicken for one dollar, buy a catty of turtle for one dollar, buy a catty of chicken at the beginning of the street, buy a catty of turtle at the end of the street. Which is more expensive, chicken or turtle?

Exercise 1.4

Pronounce the words/phrases and names first as written and then with the relevant sound changes.

1 **nàahm-sih** gentleman
2 **gwo hói** cross the sea/harbour
3 **yùh-sāang** sashimi

4 **ńgh gwok wuih-yíh** meeting of five nations
5 **Ngóh nāu gwo néih** I'm more angry than you
6 **Gwūn Tòhng** Kwun Tong (a place in East Kowloon)
7 **Gwóngsāi** Guangxi (a province in SW China)
8 **Ǹgh Méih-laih** Ng Mei-lai ('pretty')
9 **Gwok Fu-sìhng** Aaron Kwok Fu-Shing (a singer and film star)
10 **Nàahm-gīng** Nanjing (a city in south central China)

UNIT TWO

Tone contours

Tones tend to remain a locus of difficulty for any learners of Chinese, and especially for those whose own native languages do not use them. Recognizing, remembering and producing the tones correctly – or at least close enough to get by with only occasional misunderstandings – should be a priority. In this unit we look in depth at tone contours, the actual pitch levels involved in a given tone.

Entering tones

The so-called entering tones (known as **rusheng** in Mandarin or **yahp-sīng** in Cantonese) are those which occur in 'checked' syllables ending in an unreleased stop ('-p', '-t' or '-k'). When Cantonese is described as having nine tones, these three are included in addition to the familiar six. In this book, as in *Basic Cantonese*, the entering tones are simply treated as instances of the high, mid and low level tones:

	Entering tones	*Corresponding level tones*
High	**sāp** wet	**sā** sand
Mid	**gwok** country	**gwo** cross
Low	**siht** lose	**sih** matter

Note that only the three level tones generally occur in these 'checked' syllables. However, a rising tone can occur as a result of tone change (see Unit 3):

yuhk → **yúk** jade	**waht** → **wát** seed, core
sehk → **sék** stone	**dihp** → **díp** dish

Tone contours

The diacritics used in the Yale romanization system indicate the tones clearly as level, falling or rising, with the silent 'h' indicating the three low register tones. While this makes the tones relatively easy to remember, learners should be aware that these tone markings tend to simplify the actual contours involved, as do the conventional names of the tones. Hence we revisit them here in greater detail.

It can be useful to describe tone contours on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high), so that 55 represents a high level tone, 25 a tone rising from low (2) to high (5):

high level:	55 or 53 as in **sān** or **sàn** 'new'
high rising:	25 as in **yám** 'drink'
mid level:	33 as in **fan** 'sleep'
low rising:	23 as in **lóuh** 'old'
low level:	22 as in **donh** 'road'
low falling:	21 or 11 as in **wàahn** 'return (give back)'

Some learners also find it useful to draw lines above or beside the word to represent the tone contour.

High level or high falling?

The first tone, shown in this book as high level (ā), is sometimes pronounced with a high falling contour (shown in the Yale system as à). There is considerable variation here: in Hong Kong the high level contour is increasingly dominant, while in Guangzhou a high fall (52) is common. Given that the two contours are largely interchangeable, learners should not worry unduly about the fact that they are distinguished in some dictionaries and course materials. There are, however, two particles which regularly have a high falling contour when they come at the end of a sentence: **sìn** 'first' and **tìm** 'in addition'.

High rising vs. low rising

The names of these tones might suggest that they go from mid to high and low to mid respectively. In fact, these tones begin at the same lowish pitch (2 on the 1 to 5 scale). Moreover, both tend to begin with a slight dip before the rise begins. The difference between them lies in how steeply the tone rises: as high as the high level tone in the case of the high rise (25), but only as far as the mid level tone in the case of low rising (23).

Examples: **láu** 25 flat, apartment vs. **láuh** 23 willow
mán 25 article, paper vs. **máhn** 23 kiss

Low rising vs. low falling

Again, these might appear to be the reverse of each other, but there is a marked asymmetry. The low rising tone (23) rises to mid level, as described above. The low falling tone begins near the level of the low rising and low level tones, but descends even further (21) – often as far as the speaker's voice range allows. Examples:

wáih 23 great vs. **wàih** 21 surround
síh 23 market vs. **sìh** 21 time

Low level vs. low falling

The difference between these two tones poses particular difficulty for many learners. The contours 22 and 21 are similar and the difficulty is compounded by the fact that low falling (21) can sound level (11) at times (especially after another 21 tone). It can often be distinguished by the 'creaky' voice quality which results as the speaker's voice descends to the bottom of its range. Examples:

yuhng 22 use vs. **yùhng** 21 melt
yihm 22 examine vs. **yìhm** 21 salt

Mid level vs. low rising

The difference in contour between mid level (33) and low rising (23) is rather small. Most speakers do make a distinction between 'minimal pairs' such as the following:

si try	**síh** market (as in **gú-síh** stock market, **gāai-síh** street market)
sin string, line	**síhn** eel
yau thin, slender	**yáuh** have

In certain forms of Cantonese, however, including some varieties spoken in Malaysia, the two have merged so that 33 and 23 are merely alternative pronunciations of the same phonological tone, much like the high level 55 and high falling 53 tones as described above. In Hong Kong

Cantonese a similar tendency is apparent, with many younger speakers treating the mid level and low rising tones as interchangeable and even unable to perceive the distinction. The result is that such speakers use a system of five tones rather than the traditional six.

Exercise 2.1

Pronounce the following pairs so that the difference is clear, and give the tone numbers to represent the tone contours of each word.

1	**ngáahn** eye	**ngaan** late
2	**tóuh** belly	**tóu** earth
3	**lùhng** cage	**lūng** cave, hole
4	**máaih** buy	**maaih** sell
5	**ngāang** container	**ugaahug** hard
6	**yeuk** contract	**yeuhk** medicine
7	**dāng** lamp	**dáng** wait
8	**séuug** want	**séuhng** come up

Exercise 2.2

Pronounce the following phrases noting where the crucial differences lie.

1a	**Waahk yāt tìuh sin**	Draw a line
b	**Waahk yāt tìuh síhn**	Draw an eel
2a	**Kéuih daai ngáahn-géng**	He wears glasses (spectacles)
b	**Kéuih taai ngaahng-géng**	He's too stubborn (*lit.* stiff-necked)
3a	**Yī hóu ngáahu-jīng**	Cure eyes
b	**Yī hóu ngàahm-jing**	Cure cancer
4a	**Ngóh yiu cheung chín**	I need to change some money
b	**Ngóh yiu chéung chín**	I want to rob (someone of) money
5a	**Sung go jáu-gwai làih**	Deliver a drinks cabinet
b	**Sung go jáu-gwái làih**	Deliver an alcoholic (*lit.* wine-devil)
6a	**Léih mohng mātyéh a?**	What are you staring at?
b	**Léih mòhug mātyéh a?**	What are you busy with?
7a	**Ngóhdeih heui máaih dāng**	We're going to buy lights
b	**Ngóhdeih heui maaih dang**	We're going to sell chairs
8a	**Ngóh jeui suhk haih Āu jāu sí**	I'm most familiar with European history
b	**Ngóh jeui suhk haih Āu jāu síh**	I'm most familiar with the European markets

Exercise 2.3

Pronounce the following triplets with distinct tone contours.

1	**láahn** lazy	**laahn** broken	**làahn** difficult
2	**móhng** net	**mohng** stare at	**mòhng** busy
3	**chēui** blow	**cheui** crispy	**chèuih (sāam)** take off (clothes)
4	**chéung** rob	**cheung** sing	**chèuhng** long
5	**máahn** evening	**maahn** slow	**(yéh)màahn** barbaric
6	**tīu** carry	**tiu** jump	**tìuh** a classifier for long, slender things
7	**būn** move	**bun** half	**buhn** companion
8	**gōi** should	**gói** change	**goi** cover
9	**syūn** sour	**syun** calculate	**syùhn** boat
10	**sīu** burn	**síu** little	**siu** laugh

UNIT THREE

Changed tones

Changed tones are cases where the expected ('citation') tone is replaced by a different ('changed') tone. The citation tone is the one which is used when a word is cited on its own, as when it is read from a written character. For example, **tìuh** as a classifier is cited with the low falling tone and normally so pronounced, as in **tìuh fu** referring to a pair of trousers. However, in words such as **syut-tíu** (ice lolly) and **gām-tíu** meaning a gold bar, it appears with the high rising changed tone. This results in alternations between a (usually low) tone and a high rising (occasionally high level) one. Such alternations are sufficiently frequent and systematic for learners to need to take note of the main patterns. The ability to produce changed tones serves as a kind of 'shibboleth' identifying the native Cantonese speaker.

The high rising changed tone

This 'tone change' is a process whereby a tone becomes a high rising tone. This happens in a wide range of circumstances, typically applying to the last syllable of a compound expression:

- In compounds with a specialized meaning:

  sin string → **gong-sín** steel wire
  wàahn ring, circle → **yíh-wáan** earring
  yaht day → **yàhn-yát** everyone's birthday (the seventh day of the Chinese New Year)
  jaahk-yaht pick a day → **jaahk-yát** pick a good day (for a wedding, moving house, Caesarean, etc.)

- In names with the personal prefix **a-** or epithets such as **lóuh** (old), typically referring to men familiar to the speaker:

Làih → A-Lái	(Mr) Lai
Wòhng → A-Wóng	(Mr) Wong
Chàhn → Lóuh-Chán	(Old) Mr Chan
Wùh → Wú-jái	young Wu

- In reduplicated names:

Lìhng-Líng	Ling
Mìhng-Míng	Ming
Sìhng-Síng	(nickname for the celebrity Aaron Kwok Fu Sing)
Fèih-Féi	Fatty (nickname for a portly character)

- In reduplicated adjectives and adverbs, where the second syllable changes tone:

hàahm salty → **hàahm-háam-déi**	rather salty
wàhn dizzy → **wàhn-wán-déi**	a bit dizzy
jeui drunk → **jeui-jéui-déi**	a bit drunk, tipsy

As the examples suggest, this change applies largely to words with low tones, occasionally to those with mid level tones, and not at all to those with high tones. Note also that most of these patterns involve the last syllable of a compound expression. When it is not the last syllable the change does not apply:

sih-tàuh boss → **sih-táu** but **sih-tàuh-pòh** woman boss (not ***sih-táu-pòh**)
mùih-yàhn matchmaker → **mùih-yán** but **mùih-yàhn-pòh** woman matchmaker

Some cases of tone change are more or less obligatory, while others are optional. The following forms involve obligatory tone change:

yàhn person:	**léuih-yán** woman **nàahm-yán** man **mùih-yán** matchmaker
yáuh friend:	**tō-yáu** boy/girlfriend (*lit.* dating pal) **móhng-yáu** Internet fan/pal **faatsīu-yáu** fanatic, aficionado
lìhn year:	**seuhng-lín** last year, **chìhn-lín** the year before last **chēut-lín** next year, **hauh-lín** the year after next

hòhng profession, company: **leuhtsī-hóng** solicitors' firm
gīnggéi-hóng brokers' firm
Taaijí-hóng Prince Building in Central
yèuhng hóng foreign companies e.g. **Taaigú yèuhng hóng** The Swire Company
ngàhn-hòhng or **ngàhn-hóng** bank (with optional tone change)

daai as a verb 'bring' is in the mid level tone:

Go mìhngsīng daai-jó go léui gin geijé
The film star brought her daughter to see the reporters

but when it functions as a noun for 'belt' or 'strap', the tone is always high rising.

bīu dáai watch strap **būng dáai** bandage

Similarly, **doih** as a verb 'to pocket' and classifier 'a bag of' (see below) but **dói** is a noun for 'pocket'; 'bag':

Kéuih doih-jó yāt baak mān lohk dói
(*lit.* he pocketed one hundred dollars down pocket)
He pocketed a hundred dollars

Changed tone is also found in some idiomatic expressions:
tàuh →**táu** as in **hám *táu* màaih chèuhng** bump one's head against the wall

Kéuih gīk dou chā-dī hám táu màaih chèuhng
He's so angry that he almost banged his head against the wall

In a number of combinations the tone change is optional:

lìhn year	**gām lìhn** or **gām-lín** next year **mìhng lìhn** or **mìhng-lín** next year
sìh time	**gó(jahn)-sìh** or **gó(jahn)-sí** then **gauh(jahn)-sìh or gauh(jahn)-sí** in the past
yùhn currency	**Méih yùhn** or **Méih yún** American dollar **Yaht yùhn** or **Yaht yún** Japanese yen

pàaih period	**li pàaih/gó pàaih** or **li páai/gó páai** these days/in those days
pàaih label	**mouh pàaih** or **mouh páai** fake brand **mìhng pàaih** or **mìhng páai** name brand **mìhng páai** name tag (with obligatory tone change)

The changed tone forms of these terms such as currencies are used especially by professionals to whom they are very familiar. This reflects the association of changed tones with familiarity.

Changed tone due to contraction

The high rising changed tone also occurs as a result of contraction:

- In expressions involving contraction of **yāt** 'one', the combination of a level tone and the high tone of **yāt** results in the high rising tone:

  si yāt si → sí-si have a try
  bin yāt bin → bín-bin have a change
  yāt go yāt go → yāt gó-go one at a time
  yāt deui yāt deui → yāt déui-deui one pair at a time
  yāt sìh yāt sìh → yāt sí-sìh occasionally
  leng yāt leng → léng-leng

  Go beisyū jeuk dou léng-leng gám heui hōi-wúi
  (*lit.* The secretary dresses pretty-pretty thus go meeting)
  The secretary goes to meetings dressed up to the nines

- The perfective marker **jó** is sometimes dropped, leaving behind its rising tone (and a lengthened vowel) on the preceding verb:

  Fong-jó ga meih a? → **Fóng' ga meih a?**
  Have you started your holiday yet?

  Máaih-jó fēi meih a? → **Máai' fēi meih a?**
  Have you bought the tickets?

Classifiers and changed tones

Here there is a rather systematic alternation between a low tone for the classifier and the changed tone when the same word appears as a noun or part of a compound noun:

	Classifier	*Noun*
bohng pound (weight)	**yāt bohng yuhk** a pound of meat	**yāt go bóng** a scale
dihp plate, disc	**yāt dihp choi** a dish of vegetables	**jek díp** a plate **dihnlóuh chìh-díp** computer disk
doih bag	**géi doih laahpsaap** a few bags of rubbish	**sán-dói** handbag
hahp box	**léuhng hahp béng** two boxes of cakes	**go háp** the box
pin slice	**yāt pin tòhng** a piece of sugar cane	**ngòh-pín** sliced goose (a Chiu Chow speciality) **yùh-pín** slices of fish **cheung-pín** CD/record
pùhn basin	**sèhng pùhn séui** a basinful of water	**mihn-pún** wash basin (but **fā-pùhn** container for plants)
tìuh strip	**tìuh yú** fish	**syùh-tíu** potato chip **yàuh-tíu** (a savoury elongated doughnut eaten with rice congee)

The high level changed tone

A second kind of tone change, much less common than the first, produces a high level tone. As with the high rising changed tone, it is usually the last syllable in a compound expression which is affected. The most frequently encountered examples involve kinship terms:

múih younger sister → **mūi-mūi** little sister (as an address term)
síujé Miss → **jèhjē** or **gājē** big sister

daaih-ngáahn-mūi	big-eyed girl
dākyi-mūi	cute girl, cutie
daaih-luhk mūi	mainland girl
bān-mūi	Filipina girl (used of domestic helpers)

These forms are colloquial and tend to be pejorative – they often occur with the classifier **tìuh** as in **gó tìuh lēng-mūi** 'that lass'. Other sporadic cases include:

lìhng spritely, versatile → **jīng-līng** shrewd, clever
méi last → **daih mēi** the last, **bāan mēi** come last (as in an exam)
láahng cold → **lāangsāam** sweater, **yehlāang** second-hand goods

In many cases this change is optional:

yauh-paai or **yauh-pāai**	right-wing party
yìhgā or **yīgā**	now
gām-máahn or **gām-māan**	tonight

In a few cases either the high rising or the high level changed tone may be used:

yāt go yàhn one person, but **yāt go yán/yān** alone, all by oneself
Kéuih yāt go yān làuh hái Hēunggóng
She stays in Hong Kong all on her own

Further cases of the high level changed tone arise in baby talk:

hóu yáih → **hóu yāi, yāi-yāi** naughty

When **daaih** 'big' changes to high level **dāai**, the opposite meaning obtains:

Kéuih dāk gam dāai, jouh dāk dī māt a? (from a Cantonese soap opera)
She's so small, what can she do?

Léih dāai-dāai go góján jauh heui gwo Méihgwok ge la
When you were little, you had been to the United States

Exercise 3.1

Add the tone change in the following forms where applicable.

1 **chau** smelly → ______ ______ **-déi** rather smelly
2 **laahn** broken → ______ ______ **-déi** a bit broken
3 **waaih** broken → ______ ______ **-déi** not working very well
4 **guih** tired → ______ ______ **-déi** a bit tired
5 **lyuhn** messy → ______ ______ **-déi** rather messy
6 **chèuhng** long → ______ ______ **-déi** rather long
7 **lèuhng** cool → ______ ______ **-déi** rather cool
8 **hàhn** itchy → ______ ______ **-déi** rather itchy
9 **làhm** tender, soft → ______ ______ **-déi** rather tender, soft
10 **lùhng** deaf → ______ ______ **-déi** a bit deaf
11 **laaht** spicy hot → ______ ______ **-déi** rather spicy hot
12 **mìhng** understand → ______ ______ **-déi** understand a little (not fully understand)

13 **jī** know → ______ ______ **-déi** know a little (about something)
14 **gwōng** bright → ______ ______ **-déi** rather bright
15 **sin** slippery → ______ ______ **-déi** rather slippery

Exercise 3.2

Apply the high rising tone change to the following:

Example: **gūng-tàuh** head worker → **gūng-táu** foreman

A: obligatory tone change

1 **gong-tìuh** steel bar → ______ ______
2 **hói-meih** dry seafood → ______ ______
3 **gauh lìhn** last year → ______ ______
4 **tói-mihn** table surface → ______ ______
5 **ōnchyùhn-daai** safety belt → ______ ______
6 **tō-hàaih** slippers → ______ ______
7 **goklōk-tàuh** corner → ______ ______
8 **máaih làuh** buy a flat → ______ ______
9 **taaiyèuhng ngáahn-geng** sunglasses → ______ ______
10 **Hēunggóng-deih, (yàhn dō, chē dō)** (*lit.* Hong Kong land, many people, many cars) → ______ ______

B: optional tone change

11 **sānmàhn** news → ______ ______
12 **gójahn** then → ______ ______
13 **gójahn-sìh** then → ______ ______
14 **diht lohk deih** fall on the ground → ______ ______
15 **yáuh yāt pàaih (móuh gin)** (I haven't seen you) for some time → ______ ______
16 **sān-lèuhng** bride → ______ ______
17 **sān-lòhng** bridegroom → ______ ______
18 **sī-daih** fellow student (of the same teacher) → ______ ______
19 **dá màhjeuk** play mahjong → ______ ______
20 **boují tàuhtìuh** newspaper headline → ______ ______

Exercise 3.3

Choose the appropriate pronunciation of classifier vs. noun.

1 **Ngóh būn-jó géi go ______ (hahp/háp) heui sān ūk**
I moved a few boxes to the new house
2 **Kéuih daai-jó yāt ______ (tìuh/tíu) jyunsehk gēnglín**
She wore a diamond necklace
3 **Jek māau dá laahn-jó géi jek ______ (dihp/díp)**
The cat broke a few dishes
4 **Léih kéih séuhng go ______ (bohng/bóng) bohng-háh lā**
Stand on the scale to measure your weight
5 **Ngóh jūngyi sihk sìhchoi yuhk ______ (pin/pín) faahn**
I like sliced pork with rice and seasonal vegetables
6 **Ngóh giu-jó yāt ______ (dihp/díp) lóuh-ngó**
I've ordered a dish of marinated goose (a Chiu Chow speciality)
7 **Cheui-bōk-bōk ge syùh ______ (tìuh/tíu) jeui hóu-sihk**
Crispy chips taste the best
8 **Liuh Síujé daai-jó géi ______ (hahp/háp) béng làih**
Miss Liu has brought a few boxes of cake along
9 **Tói seuhngbihn yáuh ______ (pùhn/pún) séuisīn-fā**
There are some daffodils in a basin on the table
10 **Mgōi béi go ______ (pùhn/pún) ngóh ā**
Please give me a tray (as in a fast food buffet)

Exercise 3.4

Apply the high level changed tone to the following:

optional tone change

1 **tīng-máahn** tomorrow evening → ______ ______
2 **pòhpó** grandma → ______ ______
3 **séi-ngaahng-paai** die-hards → ______ ______
4 **goklohk** corner → ______ ______
5 **lèuih-léui** little girl → ______ ______
6 **móuh géi loih** not too long → ______ ______

obligatory tone change

7 **hēunghá-múi** country girl → ______ ______
8 **mòuh-*mòuh* gūngjái** furry toy animal → ______ ______
9 **ngáahn-yāp-mòuh** eyelashes → ______ ______
10 **sáují-méih** last finger → ______ ______

UNIT FOUR
Reduplication

Reduplication involves repeating a syllable according to a certain pattern. The effect depends on what is being reduplicated – nouns, adjectives, etc. – sometimes making the meaning of the word more vivid, sometimes attenuating it. Many of the patterns involve a changed tone, like the reduplicated adjectives with **-déi** discussed in Unit 3 (see also *Basic Cantonese,* Unit 9). Intermediate learners should recognize the main patterns and their implications. At a more advanced stage they may try to make up their own reduplicated forms, although this can be somewhat hit and miss since the processes of reduplication are not entirely predictable.

ABB adjectives

A number of adjectives are made more vivid by the addition of a reduplicated syllable (sometimes meaningful in its own right, but often not):

i Colour terms

hāk black, dark	**hāk-māng-māng** or **hāk-mā-mā** pitch dark
baahk white	**baahk-syūt-syūt** white as snow (**syut**)
hùhng red	**hùhng-dōng-dohng** red (as in clothes) or **hùhng-bōk-bōk** rosy (as in cheeks)
chēng light green	**chēng-bī-bī** too green, unripe
wòhng yellow	**wòhng-gàhm-gàhm** yellowed (as in lecture notes, skin)

ii Size and dimension

fèih fat	**fèih-tàhn-tàhn** fatty or **fèih-dyūt-dyūt** chubby
san thin	**sau-máang-máang** slim (of people)
ngái short	**ngái-dāt-dāt** short, stocky (of people)

bohk thin	**bohk-chīt-chīt** thin (of clothes, paper, etc.)
chèuhng long	**chèuhng-làaih-làaih** (over) long
bín flat	**bín-teht-teht** flat (surface)
maht dense	**maht-jāt-jāt** cramped, crowded
yùhn round	**yùhn-lūk-lūk/yùhn-dàhm-dàhm/yùhn-dàhm-dèuh** rounded

iii Taste

cheui crisp	**cheui-bōk-bōk** crispy
syūn sour	**syūn-mēi-mēi** on the sour side
tìhm sweet	**tìhm-yèh-yèh** too sweet, sickly
táahm bland	**táahm-mauh-mauh** too bland, tasteless

These forms are used as expressive adjectives:

Kéuih sé dī jih maht-jāt-jāt ge
The characters he writes are cramped

Kéuih jyú dī sung táahm-mauh-mauh ge
The food he cooks is too bland

Two or more such forms can be combined to paint a vivid picture, for example:

Go bìhbī hóu dākyi, fèih-dyūt-dyūt, baahk-syūt-syūt
The baby is pretty, chubby and white as snow

Faai mihn yùhn-lūk-lūk hùhng-bōk-bōk
Her face is rounded and rosy

AAB verbs and adverbs

Most of these expressions exist only in reduplicated form:

gáau-gáau-jan meddle (***gáau-jan** does not exist)
tàhn-tán-jan shake (***tàhn-jan** does not exist)
jihng-jíng-gāi or jihng-gāi-gāi quietly, secretly (***jihng-gāi** does not exist)
kàhm-chēng → kàhmkám-chēng in a hurry

These forms serve as predicates and/or adverbs:

Ngóh gínggou léih, mhóu joi gáau-gáau-jan la
I warn you, don't meddle any more

Léih kàhmkám-chēng gwo máhlouh, gón-jyuh heui bīn a?
You crossed the street in such a hurry, where are you going to?

Kéuih meih hōi yùhn wúi jauh jihng-jíng-gái ján-jó
(*lit.* she not yet finish meeting then quietly-quietly left)
She quietly left before the end of the meeting

AABB adjectives and adverbs

Words consisting of two syllables are reduplicated by repeating each syllable in the pattern AABB:

daaih-fōng	graceful	→	**daaih-daaih-fōng-fōng**	elegant, graceful(ly)
sī-màhn	refined	→	**sī-sī-màhn-màhn**	gentlemanly
sei-fōng	square	→	**sei-sei-fōng-fōng**	rather square
sih-daahn	indifferent	→	**sih-sih-daahn-daahn**	rather indifferent(ly)
kàuh-kèih	casual	→	**kàuh-kàuh-kèih-kèih**	casually
faai-cheui	quickly	→	**faai-faai-cheui-cheui**	nice and quickly

These forms may also serve as adverbs (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 10):

A-Lìhng kàuh-kàuh-kèih-kèih ga-jó go gwáijái
Ling casually got married to a foreign boy

Ngóhdeih faai-faai-cheui-cheui gáau-dihm lī dāan sāangyi lā
Let's get this business deal over and done with quickly

Such reduplication applied to directional verbs gives a meaning of repetition:

séuhng-séuhng-lohk-lohk	go up and down
héi-héi-dit-dit	rise and fall
chēut-chēut-yahp-yahp	come in and out

Kéuih ge yāt sāng héi-héi-dit-dit, haih paak hei ge hóu tàihchòih
Her life is full of ups and downs; it is good material for a film

Lī go deihdím hóu fōngbihn; hóu dō yàuhhaak chēut-chēut-yahp-yahp
This location is convenient, many tourists come in and out of this place

As with the ABB forms above, two or more AABB adjectives or adverbs can be combined to give a particularly vivid impression:

Gwōng-máahng bright → **gwōng-gwōng-máahng-máahng** nice and bright
fut-lohk spacious → **fut-fut-lohk-lohk** pleasantly spacious

Gāan sān ūk gwōng-gwōng-máahng-máahng fut-fut-lohk-lohk
The new house is nice and bright and spacious

Jūk léih gihn-gihn-hōng-hōng faai-faai-lohk-lohk
(*lit.* wish you healthy–healthy happy–happy)
Wishing you health and happiness

Onomatopoeic expressions

Reduplication commonly appears in onomatopoeic expressions, with tone change of the second syllable where applicable (see Unit 3). Typically these include the noun **sēng** meaning 'voice' or 'sound':

kàh-ká-sēng or **hā-hā-sēng** (as in laughing)
mā-mā-sēng (as in scolding, rebuking)
mē-mē-sēng bleating (sheep)
wāng-wāng-sēng buzzing (bees)
guhk-gúk-sēng or **gohk-gók-sēng** crowing (cock)
gwàhng-gwáng-sēng (usually construction noise, as in remodelling a house)
lòhm-lóm-sēng (any big noise as in a construction site)

Many of these onomatopoeic expressions are used as predicates or as adverbs:

jìh-jàhm → **jìhjī-jàhmjàhm** (usually in chatting secretly)
Kéuihdeih sèhngyaht jìhjī-jàhmjàhm; fàahn séi yàhn la
They're always chatting in a low voice; it's very annoying

jī-jā → **jījī-jājā** (talking noisily like birds chirping)
Dī hohksāang yātjóu jījī-jājā háidouh kīnggái
(*lit.* the students early chirping here chatting)
The students are chatting away every morning

Some of these forms have an adverbial meaning unrelated to sound, as in **lōk-lōk-sēng** or **lāak-lāak-sēng** (fluently), **làh-lá-sēng** and **jàh-já-sēng** (quickly):

Kéuih Yīngmán hóu lēk ga; góng dou lāak-lāak-sēng
Her English is very good; she can speak it fluently

Ngóh séung làh-lá-sēng jouh saai dī yéh
I want to finish the work quickly

Kéuih jàh-já-sēng sé yùhn fūng seun, sahp fānjūng dōu msái
She finished writing the letter quickly and it didn't even take ten minutes

Reduplication in baby-talk register

As in other languages, reduplication is a feature of the baby talk used between parents and small children. The baby-talk forms often resemble the adult ones, as in the case of ABB forms with verb and reduplicated object:

yám-lāai drink milk → **yám-lāai-lāai**
yám-séui drink water → **yám-séui-séui**
sái-mihn wash one's face → **sái-mihn-mihn**
maat-mihn wipe one's face → **maat-mihn-mihn**
baahn-leng make oneself up → **baahn-leng-leng**
chūng-lèuhng have a shower → **chūng-lèuhng-léuhng**

Other baby-talk expressions are used only in ABB forms:

sihk eat → **sihk mūm-mūm**	eat
ō excrete → **ō-syùh-syùh/ō-syùh-syú**	pee, go wee-wee
sái wash → **sái-baahk-baahk**	wash oneself clean
buhk ambush → **buhk-lēi-lēi**	play hide and seek

Exercise 4.1

Reduplicate the adjective to give a vivid impression (note that **hóu** is not normally used with reduplicated adjectives).

Example: **Kéuih go jéfū hóu sī-màhn**	Her brother-in-law is gentlemanly
→ **Kéuih go jéfū sī-sī-màhn-màhn**	nice and gentlemanly

1	**Gāau ūk hóu kéihléih**	The house is orderly
2	**Go léui hóu baahk-jehng**	The daughter is fair (in complexion)
3	**Tou hei hóu póutūng**	The film was ordinary
4	**Ngóhdeih ūkkéi hóu yihtlaauh**	Our home is lively
5	**Gó gāau hohkhaauh hóu séi-báau**	The school is strict (inflexible)
6	**Lóuhbáau gāmyaht hóu mángjáug**	Today the boss is impatient, frustrated
7	**Go dīksí sīgēi hóu chōulóuh**	The taxi driver is rude
8	**Kéuih go jái hóu gōudaaih**	Her son is big and tall
9	**Ngóh fahn gūng hóu ōndihng**	My job is stable
10	**Gó go móhugkàuh mìhngsīug hóu daaih-jek**	The tennis star is well-built

Exercise 4.2

Add a reduplicated adverb to the sentence based on the adjective provided.

Example: **Kéuihdeih lèih-fān** (**chèuih-bín** casual) They got divorced
→ **Kéuihdeih chèuih-chèuih-bín-bín lèih-fān**
They casually got divorced

1 **Kéuih sailóu daapying wàahn chín** (**hàhm-wùh** vague)
His brother promised to return the money (vaguely)
2 **Kéuihdeih bouji sān ūk** (**gáandāan** simple)
They're decorating the new house (simply)
3 **Kéuih fuhmóuh yéuhng daaih kéuih** (**sānfú** endure hardship)
His parents brought him up (with much hardship)
4 **Nī gāan gūngsī syūnbou pocháan** (**jingsīk** formally)
This company declared itself bankrupt (formally)
5 **Ngóh hēimohng léih duhk-syū** (**kàhnlihk** diligently)
I hope you will study (hard)
6 **Kéuih gói saai dī gyún** (**hīngsūng** relax)
She marked all the papers (in a relaxed manner)
7 **Jūk léih ló dóu hohk-wái** (**seuhnleih** smooth)
Hope you get the degree (smoothly)
8 **Dáng ngóh gáaisīk béi léih tēng** (**chèuhng-sai** detailed)
Let me explain to you (in a detailed manner)

Exercise 4.3

Choose a suitable onomatopoeic form to modify the verb phrase.

1	______ **haam** cry	a	**gwàhng-gwáng-sēng** banging noise
2	______ **jihgéi tùhng jihgéi góng yéh** talk to oneself	b	**jījī-jājā** chirping
3	______ **siu** laugh	c	**buhk-búk-sēng** pulsing
4	______ **góng hàahu-wá** gossip	d	**jìh-jī-jàhm-jàhm** quietly chit-chatting
5	______ **góng beihmaht** talk secrets	e	**àhm-àhm-chàhm-chàhm** talking to oneself
6	______ **jōngsāu** remodel	f	**wā-wā-sēng** crying noise
7	______ **laauh go jái** scold the son	g	**kàh-ká-sēng** chuckling noise
8	______ **sām tiu** heart beating	h	**mā-mā-sēng** rebuking
9	______ **heui tàuhsou** go to complain	i	**bàh-bá-sēng** flowing out in great quantity
10	______ **làuh hyut** bleeding	j	**ngàhng-ngáng-sēng** mumbling

Exercise 4.4

Reduplicate both the adjectives to give a vivid impression of the situation.

Example: **Ngóh sèhngyaht dōu hóu hōisām, hóu gihnhōng**
I'm always happy and healthy
→ **Ngóh sèhngyaht dōu hōi-hōi-sām-sām, gihn-gihn-hōng-hōng**

1 **Kéuihdeih hóu chānmaht, hóu yīuugahn**
They're very close and intimate
2 **Gó go làahmyán hóu sàhnbei, hóu gwáisyú**
That guy is mysterious and stealthy
3 **Ngóh lóuhgūng hóu sìhngsaht, hóu táanbaahk**
My husband is honest and frank
4 **Nī go jokgā sé ge yéh hóu hūngduhng, hóu kèihgwaai**
The stuff written by this author is empty and strange
5 **Kéuih go yéung hóu yìhmsūk, hóu láahng-ngouh**
He looks serious, cold and arrogant
6 **Gāan ūk hóu gōnjehng, hóu jíngchàih**
The house is nice and clean, neat and tidy
7 **Léih go léuih-pàhngyáuh hóu sīmàhn, hóu daaih-fōng**
Your girlfriend is gentle and graceful
8 **Kéuih gāan seuihfóng hóu syūfuhk, hóu hōiyèuhng**
Her bedroom is cosy and open

9 **Léih go beisyū hóu māfū, hóu fùhlūk**
Your secretary is sloppy and irresponsible
10 **Ngóh sailóu hóu gúwaahk, hóu gwái-máh**
My brother is cunning and tricky

Exercise 4.5

Choose one of the ABB adjectives/adverbs (or two where specified) for each sentence.

1 **Kéuih dī tàuhfaat** Her hair ______
2 **Kéuih hàahng-louh** She walks ______
3 **Go bō** The ball ______
4 **Dī geijé mahn dou kéuih** The reporters questioned him till ______
5 **Léih sèhngyaht lyún góng-yéh** You always talk nonsense ______ **gám**
6 **Gó go hohksāang sìhngjīk hóu hóu, sèhngyaht** That student's marks are very good and he often brags ______
7 **Dihp choi** The vegetables ______, ______
8 **Gauh jyūyuhk** The pork ______, ______
9 **Kéuih dī pèihfū** Complexion ______, ______
10 **Dī hóisīn** The seafood ______, ______

a **yùhn-lūk-lūk** roundish
b **táahm-mauh-mauh** tasteless
c **waaht-lyūt-lyūt** soft
d **ngàh-chaat-chaat** proud, bragging
e **yiht-laaht-laaht** piping hot
f **háu-ngá-ngá** speechless
g **baahk-syūt-syūt** white, fair
h **ngohng-gēui-gēui** stupid
i **wū-jēut-jēut** dark, shiny
j **fèih-tàhn-tàhn** fat
k **maahn-tān-tān** slowly
l **yàuh-lahm-lahm** oily
m **gōn-jāng-jāng** very dry
n **hēung-pan-pan** fragrant, smells nice

UNIT FIVE

Word formation

Apart from reduplication, new words are formed largely by compounding – juxtaposition of morphemes – and a small number of prefixes and suffixes.

Forming nouns

In forming compound nouns the modifying words come before the noun itself, much as they do in English:

People:

i Attributes modifying **yàhn** 'person'

hóu-yàhn good, nice person
waaih-yàhn bad person, villain
kùhng-yàhn poor person
yáuh-chín-yàhn rich person
chūngmìhng-yàhn clever person
chéun-yàhn stupid person
daaih-chìhng-yàhn great lover
daaih-méih-yàhn great beauty
Oujāu-yàhn Australian (person)
Méihgwok-yàhn American
Yidaaihleih-yàhn Italian
Sāijohng-yàhn Tibetan

ii The suffix **-lóu** for males tends to have a pejorative connotation, referring prototypically to middle-aged, dishevelled, rough and rugged-looking men.

chāai-lóu policeman
jōngsāu-lóu decorator
chaahk-lóu thief
gēi-lóu homosexual
fūngséui-lóu fung shui consultant
sāu-máaih-lóu collector of used goods
biutaai-lóu pervert
baahkfán-lóu drug (e.g. heroin) addict

jeuijáu-lóu drunkard	**hàahmsāp-lóu** lecherous man
chīsin-lóu crazy guy	**sēui-lóu** bad guy
fèih-lóu fatty	**waht-daht-lóu** gross guy

The suffix **-pòh** or its changed-tone form **pó** provide a female counterpart of **lóu**, though less widely used:

chāai-pòh policewoman	**maaih-choi-pó** (woman) vegetable vendor
baat-pòh busybody	**mùih-yàhn-pòh** matchmaker

-jái and its female counterparts **-léui** and **-mūi** have a dimunitive meaning, also denoting familiarity:

dá-gūng-jái worker	**suhkhaak-jái** familiar customer
Yahtbún-jái Japanese guy	**Taai(gwok)-mūi** Thai girl
fā-léui flower girl, bridesmaid	**fā-jái** flower boy, page
gwái-lóu foreigner	**gwái-pòh** foreign woman
gwái-jái foreign boy	**gwái-mūi** foreign girl

Food terms provide nice illustrations of how compound nouns are formed. Note how all modifiers precede the noun:

jyū-yuhk pork	**ngàuh-yuhk** beef
baahk-choi pak choy	**tūng-choi** water spinach
muhk-gwā papaya	**chēng-gwā** cucumber
chā-sīu-bāau pork bun	**tàihjí-bāau** raisin bun
Hóilàahm gāi-faahn Hainanese chicken rice	**yuhk-sī cháau mihn** fried noodles with shredded pork

Technical terminology:

jīseun fōgeih	information technology (IT)
yàhngūng jilàhng	artificial intelligence (AI)
chīn-lìhn chùhng	the millennium bug
dihnlóuh gwōng-díp	CD/CD-ROM
sou-máh séung-gēi	digital camera
hauh-yihndoih jyúyi	Postmodernism

A special set of compounds are formed by juxtaposing opposites:

dō many + **síu** few → **dō-síu** amount
gōu tall + **dāi** low → **gōu-dāi** height
chèuhng long + **dyún** short → **chèuhng-dyún** length

For example:

Dohk-háh gōu-dāi tùhngmàaih chèuhng-dyún
Measure the height and length

A similar type combines two kinship terms to form collective nouns:

jái son + **léui** daughter	→	**jái-léui** children
hīng elder + **daih** younger brother	→	**hīngdaih** brothers
fuh father + **jí** son (formal)	→	**fuhjí** father and son
lóuhgūng husband + **lóuhpòh** wife	→	**(léuhng) gūngpó** husband and wife (colloquial)

Note how these forms are used with **léuhng** 'two' or other numerals:

Kéuihdeih léuhng fuhjí hóu chíh-yéung
The two of them, father and son look very much alike

Ngóhdeih léuhng gūngpó chaang tói-geuk
(*lit.* we two, husband and wife, are upholding table legs)
The two of us, husband and wife, are having a private meal

Kéuihdeih sāam hīngdaih háidouh jāang yuhng dihnlóuh
The three brothers are fighting for the use of the computer

Abbreviations

Longer names of companies, etc., are often abbreviated by combining the first syllable of each component word:

Yīng-gwok Hòhng-hūng Gūngsī	British Airways → **Yīng-Hòhng** BA
Sīng-ga-bō Hòhng-hūng Gūngsī	Singapore Airlines → **Sīng-Hòhng** SIA
Fō-geih daaih-hohk	The University of Science and Technology → **Fō-daaih** HKUST
Hàhngsāng jísou	The Hang Seng index (Hong Kong stock index) → **Hàhng-jí** the HSI
Jūngwàh dihnlihk	China Light and Power → **Jūng-dihn** China Light
Sījí-sāan Seuihdouh	Lion Rock Tunnel → **Sī-Seuih** LRT

Sometimes, however, the second syllable is selected to give a more satisfactory abbreviation, as with **Hēunggóng** becoming **Góng**:

Hēunggóng daaih-hohk	Hong Kong University → **Góng-daaih** HKU
Hēunggóng síu-jé	Miss Hong Kong → **Góng-jé** Miss HK
hūng-jūng síu-jé	female flight attendant → **hūng-jé**

Idiomatic abbreviations:

sáutàih dihnwá (*lit.* hand-carry phone, i.e. mobile phone) → **sáutàih**
Yáuh sih jauh dá ngóh go sáutàih lā
If there's anything, just call my mobile phone

Forming adjectives

A number of adjectives form compounds:

tāam-X greedy for X:

tāam-sām greedy
tāam-leng vain
tāam-pèhng greedy for bargains
tāam-chín avaricious, miserly

dái-X worthy, deserving of X

dái-sek lovable
dái-tái worth seeing
dái-wáan worth playing
dái-séi deserving to die
dái-máaih worth buying, good value
dái-laauh in need of a scolding
dái-sihk worth eating, good value (food)
dái-cháau deserving to be fired (sacked)

ngāam-X right for X

ngāam-sihk good to eat
ngāam-yám good to drink
ngāam-tēng good-sounding, good to hear
ngāam-tái good to look at (or read)

X-dāk capable of X

dá-dāk good at fighting
yám-dāk can drink a lot
fan-dāk can sleep a lot
sihk-dāk can eat a lot
wáan-dāk capable of playing to the full
ngàaih-dāk able to endure hardship

Adjectives can readily be formed with **yáuh** and **móuh** (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 6):

yáuh-méng famous, renowned	**móuh-tīnfahn** untalented
yáuh-seunsām confident	**móuh-hēimohng** hopeless

Forming verbs

Reflexive verbs and adjectives are formed with **jih** (as in **jihgéi** oneself):

jih-saaht	commit suicide	**jih-jin**	recommend oneself
jih-duhng	automatic	**jih-yihng**	confess, admit

A number of these verbs appear in the following example:

Kéuih nī tou hei jih-pīn, jih-douh jih-yín, ló-jó Ousīkā gāmjeuhng-jéung
(*lit.* he this film self-script self-direct self-act got Oscar award)
He wrote, directed and acted in this film himself and received an Oscar

tāu 'steal' forms verbs denoting surreptitious activities:

tāu-tēng eavesdrop	**tāu-sihk** snatch something to eat
tāu-tái peep	**tāu-yan** copy (books, etc.) illegally
tāu-wahn smuggle	**tāu-yíng** take secret photographs
tāu-siu smile secretly	**tāu-douh** cross illegally (into a country)
tāu-gāi (jáu) sneak away early, shirk	**tāu-láahn** snatch the opportunity to be lazy

See also Unit 6 on verb–object compounds.

Exercise 5.1

Add a modifier to specify the kind of food you prefer.

Example: **tōng** soup → **syūn-laaht-tōng** hot and sour soup

1 **faahn** rice	a **gōukoi** high calcium; **dāijī** low fat
2 **sāléut** salad	b **fèih** fat; **san** lean
3 **mihn** noodles	c **luhk** green; **lìhngmūng** lemon
4 **yuhk** meat	d **sūkmáih** corn; **fāsāng** peanut

5 **láaih** milk	e **yuht** moon; **sāi** western
6 **fán** (rice) noodles	f **chāsīn** barbecued pork; **lìhn-yùhng** lotus paste
7 **chàh** tea	g **cháau** fried; **lohmáih** sticky rice
8 **yàuh** oil	h **sāanggwó** fruit; **jaahp-choi** mixed vegetable
9 **béng** cake	i **yùhdáan** fishball; **ngàuhyún** beef ball
10 **hāau** bun	j **chōu** broad; **yau** thin; **cháau** fried

Exercise 5.2

Form adjectives with **yáuh/móuh** as cued, based on the noun given.

Example: **haauhléut** efficiency → **yáuh-haauhléut** efficient

1 **yiyih** meaning → ______ meaningful
2 **líu** substance → ______ vacuous
3 **mahntàih** problem → ______ problematic
4 **loihsing** patience → ______ impatient
5 **bánmeih** taste → ______ tasteful
6 **lèuhngsām** conscience → ______ unscrupulous
7 **leih** profit → ______ advantageous
8 **yùhnjāk** principle → ______ unprincipled
9 **haahn** boundary → ______ limited
10 **jaakyahm-gám** responsibility → ______ irresponsible

Exercise 5.3

Form abbreviations from the following:

1 **Jūnggwok ngàhnhòhng** Bank of China
2 **Dahkkēui Sáujéung** Chief Executive of the Special Administrative Region
3 **Máh-lòih-sāi-a Hòhng-hūng-gūngsī** Malaysian Airlines
4 **Ajāu Dihnsih** Asia Television (ATV)
5 **Sāi-kēui Seuihdouh** Western Harbour Tunnel
6 **Bākgīng Daaih-hohk** Beijing University
7 **Deih-hah Titlouh** Underground Railway
8 **Hēunggóng Dihndāng** Hong Kong Electric

UNIT SIX

Verb–object compounds

An important set of phrases are known as verb–object compounds: compounds because they behave in some way as a single unit. Although containing an object, they often correspond to intransitive verbs in English:

gaau-syū	teach	**sihk-faahn**	eat (a meal)
duhk-syū	study	**jyú-faahn**	cook (food)
jouh-yéh	work	**jā-chē**	drive (a car)
yàuh-séui	swim	**waahk-wá**	draw/paint (a picture)
dá-jih	type	**cheung-gō**	sing (a song)
dá-dihnwá	telephone	**béi-chín**	pay (money)

With these verbs the object is usually not translated:

Ngóh m̀h sīk jā-chē	I don't know how to drive (a car)
Yáuh yàhn háidouh cheung-gō	Someone's singing (songs)
Dáng ngóh béi chín lā	Let me pay (the money)
Ngóh go jái jūngyi waahk-wá	My son likes to draw (pictures)
Gām máahn bīngo jyú-faahn a?	Who's cooking (the food) tonight?
Léih yiu sé-seun heui seui-gúk	You have to write (a letter) to the tax office

The word **yéh** (thing; stuff) comes in handy here as a generic object which can be used with many verbs:

Ngóhdeih heui yám-yéh	We're going for a drink
Léih mhóu góng-yéh jyuh	Don't speak yet
Kéuih yauh háidouh baahn-yéh	He's pretending again
Mhóu hái ngóh mihn chìhn wáan-yéh	Don't put on a show in front of me (*lit.* play things)

With some verbs of this kind there is no way to translate the object at all:

git-fān	get married	**fan-gaau**	sleep
dihng-fān	become engaged	**tiu-móuh**	dance
lèih-fān	get divorced	**tiu-síng**	skip

The aspect marker or verbal particle comes between the verb and the object, just as it would in the case of a regular object:

Kéuih lóuhbáan chìh-*jó*-jīk	His boss has resigned
Go beisyū dá-*gán*-dihnwá	The secretary is talking on the phone
Ngóh dī pàhngyáuh kīng-*gán*-gái	My friends are chatting
Kéuih meih duhk-*gwo*-syū	He has not studied before
Ngóh juhng meih gaau-*yùhn*-syū	I have not finished teaching

This contrasts with other verbs which happen to have two syllables (but do not contain an object), where the aspect marker comes at the end:

Ngóh gáaisīk-*jó* hóu loih	I explained for a long time
Nī go gaiwaahk faatjín-*jó* géi lìhn	This project has developed for some years
Kéuih wàaihyìh-*gwo* jihgéi ge làhnglihk	He has doubted his own ability
Kéuih tùhng yàhnhaak gaaisiuh-*gán* dī syū	He's introducing the books to the guests

Directional verb compounds

The directional verbs (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 15) also form verb–object compounds:

séuhng-chē	get off (a bus, etc.)	**lohk-chē**	get off (a bus, etc.)
séuhng-tòhng	go to class	**lohk-tòhng**	finish class
fāan-gūng	go to work	**fāan-hohk**	go to school
chēut-fo	sell goods, shares	**yahp-fo**	buy goods, shares, etc.
héi-sān	get up	**gwo-sān**	pass away

Modifying the object

It is often possible to insert a modifier between the verb and its object:

fan-gaau sleep	**Go bìhbī yiu fan ngaau gaau**
	The baby has to have an afternoon nap

	Ngóh fau fāau go leng gaau sīu I'm going to have a nice sleep
chūng-lèuhng shower	**Léih yiu chūng go yiht séui lèuhng** You need to take a hot shower
fa-jōng put on make-up	**Kéuih yauh fa-jó go lùhng jōng** She's put on loud make-up again

This can be puzzling since **gaau** in **fau-gaau**, for example, is not meaningful on its own, while **lèuhng** meaning 'cool' can hardly be modified by 'hot water'. In effect, the modifier applies to the whole action, in this case taking a shower. A classifier can also be added to indicate a specific event:

sihk ***chāan*** **faahn**	have a meal
dá dō go dihnwá	make another call
tiu géi ***jek*** **móuh**	have a few dances

In the phrase **wàhn-lohng** (*lit.* dizzy-wave) there is normally a modifier:

wàhn-syùhn-lohng	get seasick
wàhn-chē-lohng	get carsick
wàhn-gēi-lohng	get airsick
wàhn-(saai)-daaih-lohng	faint, go weak at the knees

Inverted verb–object compounds

In several situations the verb–object 'compounds' may appear in inverted form or separated from each other. In such cases they preserve the meaning of the original compound:

i With **yáuh/móuh** (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 6):

jouh-yéh work → **yáuh yéh jouh**	have work to do
tiu-móuh dance → **yáuh móuh tiu**	there is dancing (to be done)
duhk-syū study → **móuh syū duhk**	have no opportunity to study
fan-gaau sleep → **móuh gaau hóu fan**	be unable to sleep properly

ii With topicalization (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 22), for example, given the verb–object compounds **duhk-syū** (study) and **fāan-hohk** (attend school) we can topicalize the objects:

Syū yauh m̀h duhk, hohk yauh m̀h fāan
He doesn't study and doesn't go to school

Similarly, based on **git-fān** (to get married), the object **fān** can be made the topic of the sentence:

> **Fān chìh jóu dōu yiu git ge la**
> (*lit.* marriage sooner or later still have to close)
> You have to get married sooner or later

iii With **lìhn . . . dōu** 'even' (see Unit 9) to emphasize the object of the verb–object compound:

> **Kéuih yìhgā lìhn gāai dōu m̀h séung hàahng**
> Now she doesn't even want to go out (**hàahng-gāai**)

> **Ngóh go jái behng dou lìhn wá dōu m̀h séung waahk**
> My son is so sick that he doesn't even want to draw (**waahk-wá**)

> **Léih mòhng dou lìhn faahn dōu móuh sìhgaan sihk àh?**
> Are you so busy that you have no time to eat? (**sihk-faahn**)

Exercise 6.1

Add the missing object where required:

1	**Ngóhdeih yìhgā heui sihk** ______	We're going to eat now
2	**Dī yām-ngohk lihng dou ngóh séung tiu** ______	The music makes me want to dance
3	**Ngóh go jái jeui lēk haih waahk** ______	My son is best at drawing
4	**Léih jeui hóu sé** ______ **béi kéuih**	You'd better write to him
5	**Léih géisìh béi** ______ **a?**	When are you going to pay?
6	**Ngóh juhng meih chūng** ______	I haven't taken a shower yet
7	**Sīngkèih-yaht msái fāan** ______	No need to go to school on Sunday
8	**Kéuih hóu jūngyi kīng** ______	He likes to chat
9	**Go behngyàhn yiu yahtyaht yàuh** ______	The patient needs to swim every day
10	**Kéuih sèhngyaht daaih-sēng cheung** ______	She always sings loudly

Exercise 6.2

Add a suitable aspect marker or particle such as **jó**, **gán**, **gwo** or **yùhn** to modify the verb–object phrase.

Example:

Kéuih hái Gānàhdaaih gaau-syū	He teaches in Canada
→ **Kéuih hái Gānàhdaaih gaau-gwo-syū**	He has taught in Canada

1	**Kéuih māmìh hái chyùhfóng jyú-faahn**	His mother is cooking in the kitchen
2	**Léih taaitáai haih-mhaih faat-pèihhei a?**	Is your wife throwing her temper tantrums?
3	**Seuhng go láihbaai ngóh fong-ga**	Last week I took leave
4	**Kéuih hái Gimkìuh duhk-syū**	He has studied at Cambridge before
5	**Ngóh hàahng-gūngsī jīhauh gokdāk hóu guih**	I felt tired after finishing shopping
6	**Léih géisìh yám-jáu lèih a?**	When did you have a drink?
7	**Ngóh hóu loih móuh háau-síh la**	It's been a long time since I took an exam
8	**Dá-dihnwá fāan ūkkéi meih a?**	Have you called home yet?

†Exercise 6.3

Separate the object from the verb by making it the topic or focus of the sentence (see Unit 9).

Example: **Yātdihng yiu jéunsìh gāau-seui**	One must pay taxes on time
→ **Seui yatdihng yiu jéunsìh gāau**	

1 **Kéuih m̀h sīk gaau-syū**
He doesn't know how to teach
2 **Sīngkèih-yaht dōu móuh dāk yāu-sīk**
Even on Sundays there's no opportunity to rest
3 **Syúga ngóhdeih dōu móuh dāk fong-ga**
Even in summer we have no opportunity to take a holiday
4 **Kéuih taaitáai yauh msái chau-jái, yauh msái fāan-gūng**
His wife doesn't need to take care of the kids or go to work
5 **Chìh jóu dōu yiu sāang-jái**
Sooner or later one has to have children
6 **Yauh m̀h daap-fēigēi yauh m̀h jā-chē**
He won't take a plane or drive

7 **Kéuih sāmchìhng m̀h hóu, yauh m̀h sihk-faahn yauh m̀h fan-gaau**
He's not in a good mood, doesn't eat or sleep

8 **Léih yauh m̀h sé-seun, yauh m̀h dá-dihnwá**
You don't write or call

9 **Kéuih yauh m̀h fa-jōng yauh m̀h chēui-tàuh**
She doesn't put on make-up or style her hair

UNIT SEVEN
Adjectives and stative verbs

Adjectives as verbs

Adjectives in Cantonese share several features with verbs. They can be used with aspect markers such as **jó**, **gwo** and **háh** (Unit 12) as well as verbal particles such as **fāan**, **saai**, **màaih** to indicate a change in the situation:

Ngóh go jái jeuigahn hōisām-jó	My son has become happier lately
Kéuih yìhgā hōisām fāan	She's happy again now

The ways adjectives and verbs are questioned and negated are also alike:

Adjective		*Verb*	
gwai-m̀h-gwai a?	Is it expensive?	**Léih jáu-m̀h-jáu a?**	Are you leaving?
m̀h gwai	It's not expensive	**Ngóh m̀h jáu**	I'm not leaving

Stative verbs

A number of words which describe a state of affairs are intermediate between verbs and adjectives. These are generally known as stative verbs. Some of the most common are:

gánjēung anxious	**suhk** familiar
gēng afraid	**chīngchó** clear
ngāam right	**mòhng** busy
sihnmouh envious	**douhgeih** jealous

Like adjectives, stative verbs enter into a range of comparative constructions (see Unit 13):

Jeui gánjēung haih léih	You're the most nervous

Léih juhng chīngchó gwo ngóh	You know even more than I do
Ngóh tùhng kéuih suhk dī	I know her better
Gám yéuhng ngāam dī	This way is more appropriate

They also behave like adjectives in other respects, such as reduplication (see Unit 4):

chīng-chó clear	→ **chīng-chīng-chó-chó**	nice and clear
suhk familiar	→ **suhk-súk-déi**	somewhat familar

Although behaving in many ways like adjectives, some stative verbs can nevertheless take an object like transitive verbs:

Kéuih hóu gánjēung dī jáiléui	She's anxious about the children
Ngóh hóu chīngchó nī gihn sih	I'm very clear about this matter (understand it well)
Ngóhdeih hóu suhk kéuihdeih	We're familiar with them (know them well)
Ngāam saai dī léuihjái	Just right for the girls
Léih jeuigahn mòhng mātyéh a?	What have you been busy with recently?
Ngóh sihnmouh léih, yauh douhgeih léih	I'm both envious and jealous of you

This transitive use of what appear to be adjectives is especially prevalent in colloquial language:

Kéuih mtóh léih	He finds you disagreeable
Kéuih sèhngyaht yúh jihgéi dī pàhngyáuh	He always embarrasses his own friends
Lóuhbáan hàahmsāp-gwo kéuih	The boss has sexually harrassed her
Go léui yauh chyun ngóh	My daughter is giving me an attitude again

Like other verbs and adjectives, they can take aspect markers such as **jó** to indicate a change in the situation described:

Ngóhdeih maahn-máan suhk-jó
We gradually got to know each other (*lit.* became familiar)

Nī go yuht mòhng-jó dī
This month has got busier

Similarly, stative verbs combine with particles such as **saai** 'all' and **màaih** (see Unit 15):

Kéuih suhk saai dī baatgwa sānmán
She's familiar with all the gossip

Ngóh mòhng màaih uī go yuht jauh msái jouh
I'll be busy for this (one more) month then I won't have to work

Easy and difficult

The words **yùhngyih** 'easy' and **làahn** 'difficult' pose some difficulty. When followed by a verb the meaning is literally 'easy to . . .' but actually means that something happens easily.

Ngóh hóu yùhngyih wáu dóu jinggeui It's easy for me to find evidence
(*lit.* I'm very easy to find evidence)

Nī dī yéh hóu yùhngyih cho It's easy to get these things wrong
(*lit.* these things are easy to be wrong)

Léih hóu làahn gáaisīk dím gáai It's hard for you to explain why
(*lit.* you're very difficult to explain why)

Ngóh hóu làahn séungjeuhng I have difficulty imagining it
(*lit.* I'm very difficult to imagine)

The literal translations are often reflected in Chinese learners' English (as in 'I'm easy to make mistakes'). Colloquially, **yùhugyih** is often shortened to **yih**, as in:

Hóu yih wán ge jē
It's easy to find it

Idiomatically, **māt** 'what' is inserted to give **yùhng-māt-yih**: a form of rhetorical question (see Unit 17):

Yùhng-māt-yih gūng dōu móuh màaih ga!
(One) could easily lose one's job as well!

A few other adjectives work the same way as 'easy' and 'difficult', notably **fōugbihn** 'convenient' and **hólàhng** 'possible':

Léih fōng-m̀h-fōngbihn sīngkèih-yaht làih a?
Is it convenient for you to come on Sunday?

Kéuihdeih m̀h hólàhng gou léih ge
There's no way they can sue you

Exercise 7.1

Add a suitable object to the stative verb.

Example: **Ngóh gin dóu dī hàaih ngāam saai léih**
I saw some shoes that were just right (for you)

1 **Ngóh hóu dāamsām** ______ I'm worried (about . . .)
2 **Kéuih hóu sihnmouh** ______ He's envious of . . .
3 **Ngóh m̀h gēng** ______ **ga** I'm not scared
4 **Kéuih làahmpàhngyáuh dahkbiht gánjēung** Her boyfriend is particularly anxious (about . . .)
5 **Kéuih séung chyun** ______ (street language) He wants to show an attitude (to . . .)
6 **Léih suhk** ______ **a?** Which . . . are you familiar with?
7 **Ngóh m̀h jī kéuih mòhng** ______ **wo** I don't know what he's busy with
8 **Hóu dō yàhn douhgeih** ______ A lot of people are jealous (of . . .)

Exercise 7.2

Add an aspect marker or verbal particle such as **jó**, **gwo**, **saai**, **màaih**, **fāan** to the adjective or stative verb to give the meaning specified.

Example: **Léih fèih-jó wo!** You've put on weight

1	**Kéuih jonh yùhn sáuseuht yìhgā leng** ______	After the operation, she's got her beauty back
2	**Kéuih yíhchìhn chàhnggīng leng** ______	She was beautiful once
3	**Léih hóuchíh leng** ______ **bo**	You seem to have become more beautiful
4	**Jeuk-jyuh gihn sān sāam, léih sèhng go leng** ______	You're looking completely beautiful
5	**Ngóh mòhng** ______ **gām chi jē**	I'll just be busy one more time
6	**Ngóh jeuigahn mòhng** ______	I've got busy lately
7	**Ngóh gām lín meih mòhng** ______	I haven't been busy this year
8	**Ngóh hōichí mòhng** ______ **dī**	I'm starting to be busy again

9 **Lī pàaih tīnhei lyúhn** ______	The weather has become warmer lately
10 **Yìhgā lyúhn** ______ ______	It's all warm again now

Exercise 7.3

Insert **hóu yùhngyih/hóu làahn** 'easy/difficult' in the following sentences.

1 **Ngóh tùhng kéuih hahpjok**
It's difficult for me to collaborate with him
2 **Kéuih lám dóu daapngon**
It's easy for her to think of the answer
3 **Kéuihdeih yèhng-jó nī chèuhng béichoi**
It's easy for them to win this competition
4 **Nī go yàhn-gín sailonhjái yuhng dóu**
It's difficult for children to use this software
5 **Kéuihdeih béi yàhn ngāak**
It's easy for them to be cheated
6 **Chín múhnjūk yāt go yàhn jānjing ge sēuiyiu**
It's hard for money to satisfy a person's real need
7 **Yìgā ge tīnhei, go go dōu sēungfūng**
In the current weather, it's easy for everyone to catch a cold
8 **Dī yāmngohk lihng ngóh lám fāan yíhchìhn ge sih**
It's easy for the music to make me think of past events
9 **Léih yíhwàih ngóh yīngsìhng yàhn jouh-yéh àh?**
You thought it's easy for me to promise people to do things?
10 **Lī júng yàhn hái nīdouh sāngchyùhn**
It's difficult for this kind of people to survive here

UNIT EIGHT

Classifiers revisited

Classifiers as articles

Classifiers play several important roles in Cantonese grammar (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 8). One of the distinctive grammatical features of Cantonese is the way in which the classifier acts like a definite article, as in **ga chē** 'the car' referring to a particular car known to the speaker. This is especially so when the classifier goes with the subject or topic of the sentence:

Gāau ūk héi hóu la	The house is finished
Fahn boují tái yùhn la	I've finished reading the newspaper

Compare a 'bare' noun used without a classifier, which refers to things belonging to a certain category in general:

Páau-chē gwai dī	Sports cars are more expensive
Hùhng-jáu hóu yáuh-yīk	Red wine is good for you

Some minimal pairs bring out the difference between the 'generic' meaning of a noun used alone and the 'specific' meaning of the same noun with a classifier:

Gauh ūk pèhug hóu dō	Old houses are much cheaper
Gāau gauh ūk pèhng hóu dō	The old house is much cheaper
Faatgwok-yàhu hóu sīk héuugsauh	French people know how to enjoy life
Go Faatgwok-yàhn hóu sīk héungsauh	The Frenchman knows how to enjoy life

When the classifier goes with an object coming after the verb, the noun phrase may be indefinite – indicating something which is not already known to the hearer – but usually still refers to a specific entity:

Kéuihdeih máaih-jó ga sān chē	They've bought a new car
Kéuih sīk-jó go léuih-yīsāng	He's got to know a female doctor

That is, classifiers help to pick out a particular item or individual. In this respect they serve like articles in English and other European languages.

Possessive classifiers

Classifiers are often used to indicate possession in preference to the particle **ge** (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 5), especially when referring to a particular possessed item:

Léih tìuh fu taai dyún; m̀h ngāam jeuk
Your trousers are too short for you; they don't fit

Kéuihdeih gāan ūk hóyíh mohng dóu Chīng Máh Daaih Kìuh
(From) their house one can see the Tsing Ma Suspension Bridge

This may be seen as a natural extension of the use of classifier + noun to refer to specific things as described above. These usages are characteristic of Cantonese as opposed to Mandarin and most other Chinese languages. Another extension is to add a demonstrative, **nī/lī** 'this' or **gó** 'that' before the classifier:

Léih nī gihn sāam	This shirt of yours
Kéuih gó júng singgaak	That personality of his
Ngóhdeih gó chàhng láu	That flat of ours

dī as plural classifier

dī works like a rather special classifier. It serves not only to indicate plurality but also, with mass nouns, a certain quantity:

i With countable nouns:

Dī hohksāang gāmyaht m̀h làih	The students are not coming today
Dī wá hái bīndouh máaih ga?	Where did you buy the pictures?
Ngóhdeih gin dóu dī doihsyú	We saw some kangaroos

ii With mass nouns:

Dī tōng bōu lūng-jó	The soup has burnt (as a result of overcooking)

Dī yāmngohk taai chòuh	The music is too noisy
Ngóh séung máaih dī sāang-gwó	I want to buy some fruit

It is also used generically:

Dī làuhga hónchíh sīng fāan	House prices seem to be going up again
Jeuigahn dī choi hóu gwai	Vegetables have been expensive recently

A peculiar use of **dī** is in questions with **mātyéh**:

Yánh dī mātyéh yàhn háidouh a?	What people are there?
Sihk dī mātyéh hóu a?	What (things) shall we eat?

The use of **dī** here indicates that the answer to the question is expected to be in the plural.

Classifiers as quantifiers

Another feature of Cantonese classifiers is reduplication used to give the meanings 'all' or 'every':

Go-go léuihjái dōu jūngyi kéuih	All the girls like him
Léih tìuh-tìuh fu dōu haih hāk-sīk	All your trousers are black

Here two rules apply, as with other quantifiers meaning 'all' and 'every' (see Unit 15):

a **dōu** is used before the verb;

b The object with reduplicated classifier comes before the verb:

Kéuih *bún-bún syū* dōu tái-gwo	He's read every book
Ngóhdeih gāan-gāan poutáu dōu heui-gwo	We've been to every shop

When there is an auxiliary or other combination of verbs, the reduplicated classifier phrase comes before both:

Ngóh sīnsāang *tou-tou sāam* dōu yìhm gwai
My husband thinks every suit is expensive

Kéuih ***jek-jek pàaihjí*** **dōu wah m̀h jūngyi**
He says he dislikes every brand

Once the classifier is reduplicated, the noun itself can readily be omitted when the meaning is clear fom the context:

Kéuih yeuhng-yeuhng (sung) dōu jūngyi sihk
He likes everything (every dish)

Ngóhdeih gāau-gāan (poutáu) dōu heui-gwo
We've been to them all (every shop)

Nouns as collective classifiers

Collective classifiers are those such as **bāan** 'group', 'class' which refer to a grouping (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 8). Many nouns can be pressed into service as classifiers with a collective sense. The word **ūk** 'house', for example, is normally a noun, but can serve as a classifier meaning 'house full':

yāt ūk ngahm dāng	a house full of dim lights (*lit.* one house dim light)
(from a song sung by Faye Wong)	
yāt tóuh hei	a belly full of air (*lit.* one stomach air)
Tin-lohk wáan dou sèhng mihn sā	Tin-lok played till his whole face was covered in sand

Generic classifiers

Words for 'kinds' also behave as classifiers:

gó júng taaidouh	that kind of attitude
lī leuih yàhn	this kind of person

They may also be treated as nouns, hence one can also add the possessive **ge**, especially in more formal contexts such as broadcasting:

gó júng ge gámgok	that kind of feeling
lī leuih ge jitmuhk	this kind of programme

The classifier **jek**, in addition to classifying animals, serves as a generic classifier:

Gó jek pàaihjí hóu làuhhàhng	That brand is very popular
Lī jek jáu gwai-m̀h-gwai a?	Is this (brand of) wine expensive?
Kéuih sihk bīn jek láaih-fán a?	What (brand of) milk powder did he take?
Ngóh jūngyi wān-wān-yàuh-yàuh tēng-tēng-wah-wah gó jek	I like the tender, compliant kind (of man/woman)

Alternative classifiers

As the more thorough dictionaries will show, a given noun may take more than one classifier, often with a subtle difference in meaning.

Kéuih go háu gam daaih	Her mouth is so big (physically)
Kéuih bá háu hóu sāileih	She has a formidable mouth (in terms of speaking)
Léih séung tái bīn touh (hei) a?	Which film do you want to see?
Léih séung tái bīn chèuhng (hei) a?	Which screening (of the film) do you want to see?

The classifier **chèuhng** treats the noun as an event taking place in time:

Entity		*Event*	
yāt go behng	a disease	**yāt chèuhng daaih behng**	an illness
kéuih go bíuyín	her perfomance	**kéuih nī chèuhng bíuyín**	this performance of hers
yāt go ngh-wuih	a misunderstanding	**yāt chèuhng ngh-wuih**	a case of misunderstanding

For example:

Kéuih gīnglihk-gwo yāt chèuhng daaih behng jūngyū gaai-jó yīn
After experiencing a (period of) serious illness he finally gave up smoking

The classifier **chèuhng** is used here because the verb **gīnglihk** 'experience' indicates an event. Similarly:

Wòhng Fēi hōi-jó sāamsahp chèuhng yín-cheung-wúi
Wong Fei gave thirty concerts

Other alternative classifiers appear in slang expressions (Unit 24).

Adjective + classifier compounds

The adjectives **daaih** and **sai** combine with classifiers to form compounds which work like predicative adjectives:

Measures:

hóu daaih-dēui	a big pile (of papers, etc.)
hóu sai-wún	a small bowl (of rice, etc.)

Sortal classifiers:

hóu daaih-gāan (**gūngsī**)	very big (company)
hóu sai-jek (**māau**)	very small (cat)

Several expressions of this form have idiomatic meanings:

hóu daaih-jek	well-built
hóu sai-lāp	small (in physique)
hóu daaih-dáam	brave
hóu sai-dáam	cowardly
hóu daaih-wohk	big trouble (*lit.* big wok)
hóu daaih-jāi	big trouble (*lit.* big dose)
hóu daaih-beih	snobbish (*lit.* big-nose)
hóu daaih-páai	putting on airs (*lit.* big label)

Classifiers after the noun

While the classifier phrase normally comes before the noun, there are some specialized contexts in which it may follow:

i Enumerating, as in a shopping list:

máih sāam bāau, sih-yàuh yāt jēun, tóng léuhng hahp
three bags of rice, a bottle of soy sauce and two boxes of sweets

ii Advertising:

tàuh jéung sung gēipiu léuhng jēung
(*lit.* head prize give air tickets two sheet)
The first prize is two free air tickets

Verbal classifier phrases

A classifier phrase (consisting of numeral + classifier) can come after a verb to specify some aspect of the action described, much as a noun classifier specifies the noun. These phrases may thus be termed verbal classifier phrases. There are two main types:

a Indicating the frequency or duration of the action:

dá sāam háh	knock three times
dáng yāt jahn	wait a moment

b The part of the body or instrument used:

tái yāt ngáahn	take a look (*lit.* look one eye)
sihk yāt daahm	take a bite (*lit.* eat one mouthful)

A point to note here is that the object comes between the verb and the classifier phrase:

tek kéuih yāt geuk	give him a kick
sek ngóh yāt daahm	give me a kiss
laauh kéuih jāt chāan	give him a scolding (*lit.* scold him a mealful)

Such phrases are useful for quantifying actions. While **yāt** is used for single actions, the quantity can be varied, for example with **dō** 'more' to mean 'another':

tái dō yāt ngáahn	take another look
láam màaih yāt gauh	hug together closely
ngáauh kéuih géi daahm	bite him a few times
yám dō léuhng daahm	drink a couple more mouthfuls
go dihnwá héung-jó géi chi	the phone rang a few times

The verbal classifier phrase can also come at the beginning of the clause like a topic:

Yāt háh jauh dá séi jek mān
One swipe and the mosquito was dead

Yāt daahm jauh sihk saai
One mouthful and it's all gone

Ngóh yāt ngáahn tái dóu saai yahpbihn yáuh géi dō yàhn
In one look I saw how many people were inside

Exercise 8.1

Add a classifier to give the meaning indicated.

Example: **Chyùhfóng hóu gányiu**
The kitchen is important: **Go chyùhfóng hóu gányiu**

1	**Séjihlàuh hóu dung**	The office is cold
2	**Baahk-jáu hóu dái-máaih**	(The bottle of) white wine is good value
3	**Sāi-jōng taai gwai**	The suit is too expensive
4	**Sān syū maaih saai la**	The (pile of) new books have all sold
5	**Sósìh mgin-jó**	The keys are lost
6	**Sānfánjing wán fāan la**	The ID card has been found
7	**Gaaisiuh seun hóu làahn sé**	The recommendation letter is hard to write
8	**Hohksāang háidouh sihwāi**	The (class) of students are demonstrating
9	**Páau-chē gwai dī**	The sports car is more expensive
10	**Lùhnghā hóu sānsīn**	The lobster is nice and fresh

Exercise 8.2

Reduplicate the classifier to give the meaning 'all'/'every', including the adverb **dōu** before the verb (see also Unit 15).

Example: **Gāan ūk hóu leng** → **Gāan-gāan ūk dōu hóu leng**
The house is lovely — All the houses are lovely

1	**Go hohksāang jáu-jó**	The student has left
2	**Tou hei hóu muhn**	The film was boring
3	**Tìuh tàihmuhk mh làahn**	The question was not hard
4	**Jēung tói béi yàhn dehng-jó**	The table has been reserved
5	**Ga gēi baau saai**	The plane was full
6	**Kéuih bún syū hóu hóu-maaih**	His book sells well
7	**Kéuih gihn sāam hóu gwai**	Her dress is expensive
8	**Hahp tóng bāau dāk hóu leng**	The box of sweets was beautifully wrapped
9	**Ngóhdeih yiu tái bún syū**	We have to read the book
10	**Ngóhdeih giu-jó yeuhng dím sām**	We ordered a kind of dim sum

Exercise 8.3

Match the verbal classifier phrase with the verb or verb phrase provided.

1 **yám** drink	a **yāt chāan** one mealful
2 **mohng** watch	b **géi geuk** a few feet
3 **tek** kick	c **yāt háh** one time
4 **mīt léih** pinch you	d **yāt daahm** one mouthful
5 **laauh kéuih** scold him	e **yāt pōu** one game
6 **dóu** gamble	f **yāt ngáahn** one eye

UNIT NINE
Topic and focus

Making something the topic of the sentence by putting it at the beginning of a sentence is known as topicalization (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 22). In particular, this is used for:

i Making the object of the verb the topic of the sentence:

***Nī go yuht ge yàhn-gūng* kéuih yíhgīng sái saai**
(*lit.* this month's salary he already spend all)
He's already spent all of this month's salary

***Yīnggwok* hóu dō yàhn séung heui** (from a film about 1997)
(*lit.* England many people want to go)
A lot of people want to go to England

***Léihyàuh* jí yáuh yāt go** (TV advertisement)
(*lit.* reason only have one)
There's only one reason

In each case one could leave the object after the verb as usual, for example:

Hóu dō yàhn séung heui *Yīnggwok*
A lot of people want to go to England

Jí yáuh yāt go *léihyàuh*
There's only one reason

In many cases the 'topicalized' versions are preferred for stylistic and other reasons: the advertisement, for example, puts the emphasis on 'one' (relative clauses are another case in point: see Unit 18).

ii Setting a topic about which a statement is made:

Tái yīsāng **léih m̀h hóyíh tō ge**
(*lit.* see doctor you cannot drag)
You can't put off seeing the doctor

Gúdín yāmngohk **ngóh béigaau jūngyi gougkàhm duhkjauh**
(*lit.* classical music I rather like piano solo)
As far as classical music is concerned I prefer solo piano

An alternative way to make an element the topic is to place it between the subject and the verb:

Kéuih ***Dākmán*** **góng dāk hóu hóu**
(*lit.* she German speaks manner very good)
She speaks German very well

Léih ***Jūnggwok lihksí*** **sīk dāk dō gwo ngóh**
(*lit.* you Chinese history know manner more than me)
You know more about Chinese history than I do

Kéuih ***síu-tàih-kàhm*** **lāai dāk géi hóu**
(*lit.* he violin plays manner quite good)
He plays the violin quite well

Focusing with lìhn 'even'

While topicalization makes an element the 'topic' which the sentence is about, focusing involves putting an element 'in focus' as something to be emphasized. Using **lìhn** 'even', the pattern is: **lìhn** (focus) **dōu** (verb):

Lìhn kéuih taaitáai dōu m̀h jīdou	Even his wife didn't know
Lìhn ngóh go léui dōu bōng ngóh sáu	Even my daughter is helping me

Note two essential features of this construction (which generally go together – see Unit 15):

a **dōu** is inserted before the verb;
b the object of a verb, when so focused, comes in front of the verb:

Léih lìhn nīdī yéh dōu yiu
(*lit.* you even these things still want)
You even want these things!

The same pattern also occurs without **lìhn**, especially in the negative:

Ngóh yāt geui dōu móuh góug-gwo
(*lit.* I one phrase still didn't say)
I didn't say a word

Kéuih gam leng ge gāsī dōu m̀h yiu
(*lit.* she such nice furniture still not want)
She doesn't even want such nice furniture

lìhn goes naturally together with the particle **màaih** (see Unit 15), one meaning of which is 'including . . .':

Kéuih lìhu pèih dōu sihk màaih	He even eats the skin
Lìhu fahn gūng dōu móuh màaih	(He) even lost his job

sīn, jauh **and focus**

The particles **sīn** 'only' and **jauh** 'then' are also used to express focus:

Léih sīn haih jyūn-gā	*You're* the expert (not me)
Tīugyaht sīu haih ngóh sāaugyaht	My birthday is *tomorrow* (not today)
Nī go jauh haih ugóh séung wán gó go	*This* is the one I wanted to find

The two particles **sīn** and **jauh** contrast in a systematic way:

i In the domain of time:

Kéuih bun yé sahp-yih dím *sīn* fāau ūkkéi
He doesn't return home until 12 midnight

Kéuih bun yé sahp-yih dím *jauh* fāan ūkkéi
He returns home as early as 12 midnight

Here **sīn** implies that the returning is later than expected while **jauh** implies the opposite, namely, earlier than expected.

ii In the domain of quantity:

Ngóh dī pàhngyáuh yám sāam jēun jáu *sīn* gau hàuh
(*lit.* my friends drink three bottles of wine then enough throat)
My friends don't get enough until they have drunk three bottles of wine (more than expected)

Ngóh dī pàhngyáuh yám sāam jēun jáu *jauh* gau hàuh
(*lit.* my friends drink three bottles of wine then enough throat)
My friends drink three bottles of wine and that's enough (less than expected)

The sentence with **sīn** implies that three bottles is more than expected while **jauh** implies that three bottles is less than expected. A similar contrast appears in conditional sentences (see also Unit 20), where **sīn** typically marks the antecedent clause as a necessary condition while **jauh** marks it as a sufficient condition:

Dī sailouhjái fan ngóhdeih *sīn* fan
(*lit.* the children sleep we then sleep)
We won't sleep unless the children sleep

Dī sailouhjái fan ngóhdeih *jauh* fan
(*lit.* the children sleep we then sleep)
We'll sleep as long as the children sleep

Exercise 9.1

A: Make the object of the verb the sentence topic by putting it in initial position.

Example: **Kéuih m̀h jūngyi sihk laaht yéh**	He doesn't like (to eat) hot food
Laaht yéh kéuih m̀h jūngyi sihk	Hot food he doesn't like to eat

1	**Dī hohksāang meih tái-gwo nī bún síusyut**	The students have not read this novel
2	**Kéuih jeui sek go sai léui**	He loves the youngest daughter the most
3	**Kéuih hóu m̀h sé dāk maaih gāan ūk**	She is loath (unwilling) to sell the house
4	**Ngóh m̀h sīk yānséung gúdín yāmngohk**	I don't know how to appreciate classical music
5	**Ngóh hóu suhk kéuih ūkkéi yàhn**	I'm familiar with his family

B: Put the object in the second position (after the subject).

Example: **Ngóh meih heui-gwo Sāmjan**	I've not been to Shenzhen
Ngóh Sāmjan meih heui-gwo	I've not been to Shenzhen

6 **Ngóh m̀h dākhàahn tái gāmyaht ge sānmán**	I'm too busy to read today's news
7 **Ngóhdeih sīk síu-síu Yahtmán**	We know a little Japanese
8 **Kéuih hohk-jó sāam lìhn gongkàhm**	She's taken piano lessons for three years
9 **Kéuih m̀h wúih jouh gam làahn ge yéh**	He won't do such difficult things
10 **Léih yīnggōi dō dī jouh wahnduhng**	You should do more exercise

Exercise 9.2

Use **lìhn . . . dōu** and/or **màaih** to put the italicized element in focus,

e.g. **Kéuih m̀h sihk máahn-faahn**
He doesn't eat *dinner*

→ **Kéuih lìhn máahn-faahn dōu m̀h sihk**
He doesn't even eat dinner

Go bìhbī haam dou gihn sāam sāp-jó
The baby cried such that *the clothes* got wet

→ **Go bìhbī haam dou lìhn gihn sāam dōu sāp màaih**
The baby cried such that even the clothes got wet as well

1 **Ngóh daai jīpiu-bóu làih**	I bring (along) *the cheque book* (as well)
2 **Kéuih m̀h sīk jīng yú**	He doesn't (even) know how to steam *fish*
3 **Kéuihdeih meih heui-gwo Chín Séui Wāan**	They haven't (even) been to *Repulse Bay*
4 **Gíngchaat m̀h seun go yīsāng**	The police don't trust (even) *the doctor*
5 **Kéuih je ga chē béi ngóh**	He (even) loans me *his car*
6 **Ngóh gēng dou bīu láahnghohn**	I'm so scared that I (even) came out in *a cold sweat*
7 **Kéuih yiu maaih go gúdúng fājēun**	He (even) has to sell *the antique vase* (as well)
8 **Ngóh lóuhgūng hohk Chìuhjāu-wá**	My husband (even) studies *Chiu Chow* (as well)
9 **Kéuih ngoh dou sihk gaakyeh sung**	She's so hungry that she ate (even) *the left-overs* (as well)

10 **Lóuhbáan hāan dou m̀h hōi láahnghei** — The boss is so frugal that he doesn't (even) turn on *the air conditioner*

Exercise 9.3

Fill in the blank with **sīn** or **jauh** in accordance with the English translation.

1 **Ngóh fong-jó-gūng, luhk dím ______ fāan dou ūkkéi**
After I get off work, I don't get home until six (later than expected)
2 **Go daaih-jek-lóu sihk sāam wún faahn ______ báau**
The well-built man isn't full until he's eaten three bowls of rice
3 **Kéuih sé-seun béi ngóh, ngóh ______ sé-seun béi kéuih**
I'll write to him as long as he writes to me
4 **Kéuih heui Bākgīng gūnggon, yāt go yuht ______ fāan làih**
She's on a business trip to Beijing and won't come back for at least a month
5 **Go bìhbī sahpyāt yuht ______ chēut-jó-sai**
The baby was born in November (earlier than expected)
6 **Léih chīm-méng, ngóh ______ chīm**
I won't sign unless you sign
7 **Kéuih yāt chi gwo tái sāam tou hei ______ gau péi**
She doesn't get enough unless she watches three movies in a row
8 **Kéuih sāam lìhn ______ ló dóu go boksih hohk-wái**
It took her three years to get the doctoral degree (earlier than expected)

UNIT TEN
Using **jēung**

jēung is one of the 'empty' functional words (**hēui-chìh** in Cantonese) whose role is an essentially grammatical one. Its function is to take a direct object and place it before the verb:

verb–object → **jēung** – object–verb

This resembles a serial verb construction (Unit 11) except that **jēung** is not used by itself as a verb.

jēung **vs.** ba

For learners with some knowledge of Mandarin, **jēung** is the nearest counterpart to **ba** and is broadly similar in function, though the use of **jēung** is more restricted: in many cases where **ba** might be used **jēung** would not. For example:

Mandarin			*Cantonese*
Ba shu fang zai nabian	Put the book there		**Jēung bún syū fong hái gódouh**
Ba deng guan diao	Turn off the light	but not	***Jēung dāng sīk-jó**
Ba wo de shu na zhe	Hold my books	but not	***Jēung ngóh dī syū līng-jyuh**

jēung retains a sense of displacement, and in colloquial usage at least, is most typically used when the object of the sentence is literally moved from one place to another:

Ngóhdeih jēung dī gauh gāsī būn jáu
We're moving the old furniture away

Kéuih jēung dī laahn sāam dám-jó
She threw the torn clothes away

Kéuih jēung fūk wá gwa hái chèuhng douh
She hung the picture on the wall

One advantage of using the construction in such cases is that the vacant position after the verb can then be used for another element of the sentence, such as a prepositional phrase indicating where the object is moved to:

Jēung jing-geui ló chēut làih	Bring the evidence out
Jēung dī syū būn fāan làih	Move the books back

It is possible to say:

Báai go fā-jēun hái chēutbihn	Put the vase outside
Gwa dī sāam hái tīntói douh	Hang up the clothes on the roof

Nevertheless the version with **jēung** is preferred:

Jēung go fā jēun báai hái chēutbihn	Put the vase outside
Jēung dī sāam gwa hái tīntói douh	Hang the clothes up on the roof

Similarly, with duration and frequency phrases following the verb it is convenient to use **jēung** and put the object before the verb:

Sīnsāang jēung pīn mán gōi-jó sāam chi
The teacher has reviewed the composition three times

Ngóh jēung go beihmaht sāu-màaih hái sām yahpbihn sahp lìhn
I've been hiding the secret in my heart for ten years

jēung in High Cantonese

Apart from the sense of literal displacement, more abstract uses are possible. For example, **jēung** can be used in cases of transfer of ownership or possession:

Ngóh jēung nī gihn sih gāau béi léih
I turn this matter over to you

Ngóhdeih jēung bāt wàihcháan fān sāam fahn
We divide the legacy into three parts

Faai dī jēung go mìhnggwai sáubīu béi fāan yàhndeih
Return the expensive watch quickly (to the owner)

Still more abstract senses of transfer include the following:

Kéuih jēung gá ge dong haih jān ge
He treats what is false as if it were true

Dímgáai léih jēung pàhngyáuh dong jouh dihkyàhn ga?
Why do you treat friends as foes?

Léih yiu jēung yíhchìhn ge sih mòhng-gei saai (kéuih)
You need to forget about things that happened before

Such extended uses of **jēung** are a feature of High Cantonese, perhaps under the influence of Mandarin and written Chinese where **ba** would be used in such cases. They can be heard in public announcements, for example:

Chéng jēung yāmleuhng sāu-sai
Please turn your volume down

Chéng jēung gwaijuhng mahtbáu kwàihdaaih hái sānbīn
Please carry your valuable belongings with you

Similarly, transitive verbs with the suffix **-fa**, a High Cantonese feature, are often used together with **jēung**:

Jingfú dásyun jēung Hēunggóng sou-máh-fa
The government is planning to digitalize Hong Kong

Léihdeih m̀h yīnggōi jēung mahntàih fūkjaahp-fa
You should not complicate the problems

jēung . . . kéuih **and imperatives**

A rather idiomatic combination uses the pronoun **kéuih** to represent the object already mentioned as the object of **jēung**:

Ngóh jēung dī yin-wō dahn-jó kéuih I've stewed the birds' nests (for soup)

Note the regular use of the aspect marker **-jó** in this combination, which is used especially in imperative sentences:

Léih jēung dī wūjōu sāam sái-jó kéuih lā	Clean the dirty clothes
Léih jēung dī yin-wōsihk-jó kéuih lā	(Why don't you) eat up the bird's nest soup!

In contrast to those discussed above, this is quite a colloquial usage (compare other colloquial uses of **kéuih** in Unit 24).

Exercise 10.1

Form sentences with **jēung** as alternatives to those given.

Example: **Ngóh sailóu béi fāan dī chín ngóh**
My brother is giving me the money back
→ **Ngóh sailóu jēung dī chín béi fāan ngóh**

1	**Ngóh gāau gūngfo béi sīnsāang**	I hand in the homework to the teacher
2	**Kéuih wuhn-jó go mahtmáh**	She has changed the code
3	**Ngóh chéuisīu-jó go wuhháu**	I've cancelled the account
4	**Ngóh séung gwa héi fūk wá**	I want to hang up the picture
5	**Tīn-waih gói-jó go yahtkèih**	Tin-wai has changed the date
6	**Kéuih jūngyū jāp hóu gāan fóng**	He has finally tidied up the room
7	**Ngóh yiu ló fāan dī syū heui hohkhaauh**	I have to take the books back to school
8	**Mùihmúi chaap dī fā hái fājēun douh**	Little sister put the flowers in the vase
9	**Kéuih sāu-màaih saai dī seun**	She hid away all the letters
10	**Lóuhbáan chyùhn-jó dī chín yahp ngàhnhòhng**	The boss has deposited the money in the bank

Exercise 10.2

Add a resultative, duration or frequency complement in the following **jēung** constructions.

Example: **Kéuih jēung dī seun sāu màaih _____**
She hid the letters away for ten years
→ **Kéuih jēung dī seun sāu màaih sahp lìhn**

1 **Kéuih jēung gāan fóng maat dāk _____**
He wiped the room clean

2 **Gūngsī jēung go gachìhn gói-jó** ______
The company has changed the price many times
3 **Ngóh jēung bún syū yàuh tàuh dou méih tái-jó** ______
I read the book twice from beginning to end
4 **Kéuih jēung dī tàuhfaat jín dāk** ______
He cut the hair very short
5 **Kéuih jēung fahn láihmaht sāu-màaih-jó** ______
She hid the gift away for two days
6 **Kéuih jēung tìuh yú jīng-jó** ______
She steamed the fish for ten minutes
7 **Dī gūngyàhn jēung chyùhn ūk yàuh-jó** ______
The workers painted the whole house once
8 **Ngóh jēung sáu gō fāanyihk-jó** ______
I translated the song a few times
9 **Lóuhbáan jēung go gwónggou dāng-jó** ______
The boss has put up the advertisement for three days
10 **Kéuih jēung go léui baahn dou** ______
She adorned her daughter beautifully

Exercise 10.3

Form imperative sentences with **jēung** as alternatives to those given, paying attention the use of the pronoun **kéuih**.

Example: **Léih maaih saai dī gúpiu kéuih lā** Sell all the shares
→ **(Léih) jēung dī gúpiu maaih saai kéuih lā**

1 **Léih ló gihu sāam lohk làih ā**	Bring the dress down
2 **Ngóhdeih dám-jó dī laahpsaap kéuih lā**	Let's throw away the rubbish
3 **Léih faai dī gói saai dī gyún kéuih**	Hurry up and finish marking the scripts
4 **Jīkhāk wuhn-jó go dihnchìh kéuih**	Change the battery immediately
5 **Faai-faai-cheui-cheui jāp hóu gāan fóng kéuih**	Tidy up the room quickly
6 **Chan yiht yám-jó dī Jūng yeuhk kéuih**	Drink the Chinese medicine while it's hot
7 **Fong dāi go syūbāau hái deihhá**	Put the school bag down on the floor
8 **Jeui hóu dihn-jó dī tàuhfaat kéuih**	It's best to perm your hair
9 **Sái saai dī wūjōu sāam kéuih**	Wash all the dirty clothes
10 **Jōngsāu hóu gāan ūk kéuih**	Decorate the house well

UNIT ELEVEN
Serial verbs

A class of words in Chinese are known as 'coverbs' because of the way they co-occur with another verb.

Kéuih gān ngóh hohk jyú-sung (COVERB) (VERB)	He's learning to cook from me
Kéuih waihjó ngóh béi lóuhbáan laauh (COVERB) (VERB)	He was told off by the boss for my sake

In Cantonese these include a number of words which serve both as independent verbs and as coverbs:

	As verb	*As coverb*
hái	be at	at
tùhng	accompany	with
gān	follow	with
dou	reach	until
deui	face	towards
heung	face	towards (direction)
waih (jó)		for (the sake of)

Given that their meanings have to do with spatial relationships, it is tempting to equate the coverbs with prepositions, as the English translations suggest. However, the coverbs behave like verbs in taking aspect markers such as **jó**, **gwo**, **gán**, **jynh**, etc. and verbal particles such as **saai** and **fāan**:

Ga chē heung-*jó* gó bihn hàahng
The car went off in that direction

Go BBC geijé tùhng-*gwo* kéuih jouh fóngmahn
The BBC reporter has done an interview with her

Ngóh lóuhgūng tùhng-*gán* go jái wáau Daaihfuyūng
My husband is playing Monopoly with my son

Go go gúdūng hái *saai* douh hōiwúi
All the shareholders are here having a meeting

Kéuihdeih jūngyū hái *fāan* màaih yātchàih jouh-yéh
They're finally back working together again

In this respect coverbs behave like serial verbs, a series of verbs in the same clause without a conjunction linking them. This is a characteristic feature of Cantonese, together with many languages of southeast Asia, but not generally found in European languages – the closest counterpart being the American English 'Let's go eat'. A typical example is the following:

Ngóh sīnsāang wúih bōng ngóh wán chē-sìh
(*lit.* my husband will help me find car keys)
My husband will look for the car keys for me

Notice how the additional verb typically takes the place of a preposition. The meaning which results often seems to be that of a preposition rather than a verb, e.g. **bōng** literally means 'help' but in a serial verb construction it means to do something for another's benefit, not to help the person to accomplish something:

Léih bōng ngóh dá go dihnwá ā
(*lit.* you help me dial a telephone)
Make a call for me

Faai dī bōng go bìhbī wuhn liuhpín lā
(*lit.* quickly help the baby change nappy)
Change the nappy for the baby quickly

Clearly one cannot 'help' a baby to change a nappy and the intended meaning is to change it for him or her. Similarly, the verb **wán** by itself means 'look for' but in the serial verb construction this meaning is attenuated to the point where it means 'with' or 'use':

Léih wán faai bouh maaht háh kéuih lā
(*lit.* you look for sheet cloth wipe a little it)
Give it a wipe with a cloth

Léih wán go goi kám-jyuh go wohk ā
(*lit.* you look for the lid cover the wok)
Use the lid to cover the wok

Since chances are that the cover of the wok is lying within reach of the cook, this need not entail any actual searching. Similarly, it is hardly necessary to look for one's own hands:

Wán jek sáu jē-jyuh deui ngáahn
Cover one's eyes with one hand

Common meanings expressed by serial verbs include:

- With – instrument

Léih m̀h hóyíh sèhngyaht yuhng chín gáaikyut mahntàih
You can't always solve problems with money

Hóu faai hóyíh yuhng sáutàih dihnwá séuhngmóhng
Very soon one will be able to get on the Internet via mobile phones

- Together with – accompanying

Ngóh pùih léih sihk-faahn lā
(*lit.* I accompany you eat rice)
I'll have lunch with you

- For, on one's behalf

Léih doih ngóh gūnghéi Rowena ā
(*lit.* you replace me congratulate Rowena)
Send my congratulations to Rowena

Ngóh dahng kéuihdeih gōuhing
(*lit.* I for them happy)
I feel happy for them

Ngóh jānhaih dahng léihdeih m̀h dái
(*lit.* I really for you not deserving)
I feel really sorry for you

Mgōi léih waih-háh yàhndeih jeuhkséung
Please try to show consideration for others

Lī go haih waih léih dohk sāu dehug jouh ge
This is tailor made for you

Simultaneous actions

A series of verbs can express simultaneous actions, especially with the continuous aspect marker **jyuh** attached to the first verb (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 19):

Jā-jyuh fahn boují dáug yàhn
Wait for someone (while) carrying a newspaper

Go léui láam-jyuh go gūngjái fan-gaau
The daughter sleeps hugging a soft toy

Yán-jyuh ngáahnleuih góng joi gin
Say goodbye (while) holding back one's tears

Sequence of actions

A sequence of verbs can express a sequence of actions:

Gei-jyuh chèuih hàaih yahp fóug
Remember to take off one's shoes before going into the room

Báau tóuh sihk yeuhk
(*lit.* fill stomach eat medicine)
Eat before taking the medicine; take the medicine on a full stomach

Chūng yùhn lèuhng fan-gaau
Go to sleep after taking a shower

Notice how:

- These sentences express the sequence of events in time without using a conjunction meaning 'before' or 'after' (see also Unit 19).
- The order in which the verbs come reflects the sequential order of events in real time. This is a characteristic of serial verbs (often not shared by or reflected in the English translation) which is especially clear in the constructions expressing sequence and purpose. Further examples include:

Dī sailouh sīk giu sung sihk ge la	The children know how to order food to eat
Bīngo séung máaih fēi tái hei?	Who wants to buy tickets to see a film?

Purpose

When one action is done for the purpose of another, the verbs appear as a series:

Ngóh yiu chēut heui saan-bouh
I have to go out to take a walk

Kéuih yeuk ngóh heui gāai
She arranged with me to go out

Ngóhdeih yuhng chín máaih sìhgaan
We use money to buy time

Ngóhdeih chyùhn gā heui Wòhng-gām Hói-ngohn douh-ga
Our whole family is going to the Gold Coast for a holiday

The verb **jouh** 'do' can indicate the purpose for which something is done (acquired, used, etc.):

Ngóh chéng léih jouh ngóh ge bóubīu	I'll hire you as my bodyguard
Gíngchaat wán ngóh jouh jingyàhn	The police asked me to be a witness
Nī go sung béi léih jouh geilihm-bán	This is for you as a souvenir

The verbs of motion **làih** 'come' and sometimes **heui** 'go' are used similarly:

Ló làih/heui maaih	Take them to sell
Yuhng làih gaau-syū	Use it for teaching (not ***yuhng heui gaau-syū**)

Combining **jouh** and **làih**:

Ló làih/heui jouh chāamháau
Take it as a reference

Máaih làih sung béi yàhn
Buy to give to someone

Nī dī sé-jó yuhng làih jouh gaau-chòih
When these are written up we can use them as teaching material

Verbs of communication

Describing an act of communication typically involves two verbs – **góng** or **wah** expressing what the speaker does, and **tēng** 'hear' or **jī** 'know' the effect on the hearer:

Ngóh góng-jó go sīusīk béi kéuihdeih tēng	I told them the news
Ngóh m̀h wah léih jī	I won't tell you

See also Unit 21 on indirect speech.

Combining serial verbs

By combining two or more of the serial verb types we can easily end up with three or more verbs in a series:

Bōng ngóh wán jīlíu sé bougou
(*lit.* help me find material write report)
Get some material for me to write my report

Doih ngóh sé seun mahn hauh kéuih
(*lit.* replace me write letter ask after her)
Write a letter on my behalf to ask how she is

Chàhng láu héi hóu yuhng làih jouh séjihlàuh
(*lit.* the flat build finish use come do office)
When the flat is finished it will be used as an office

Exercise 11.1

Insert a verb from the list provided – **wán**, **bōng**, **yuhng**, **doih**:

Example: **Ngóh go jái <u>bōng</u> ngóh sái ga chē**
My son washes the car for me

1	**Ngóh hóyíh ______ léih sé gaai-siuh seun**	I can write a recommendation letter for you
2	**Léih yiu ______ lihk dá go bō**	You have to hit the ball with strength
3	**______ ngóh gahm jūng ā**	Would you press the bell for me?
4	**Léih ______ jek yauh sáu gahm-jyuh jēung jí lā**	Use your right hand to press the sheet down

5	**Chéug léih ______ lóuh lám háh yéh**	Please use your brain to think a little
6	**Kéuih móuh sìhgaan ______ léih séuhng-tòhng**	He doesn't have time to do relief teaching for you
7	**Ga páau-chē ______ làih béichoi ge**	The sports car is used for competition
8	**Léih yiu ______ dōdī yìhm yip tìuh yú**	Use more salt to marinate the fish
9	**Kéuih ______ jek geuk dóng-jyuh douh mùhn**	He blocked the door with his foot
10	**Léih hó-m̀h-hóyíh ______ ngóh mahuhauh kéuih a?**	Could you send greetings on my behalf?

Exercise 11.2

Formulate a serial verb construction by adding a verb phrase:

Example: **Ngóh doih kéuih** — I'm taking his place
→**Ngóh doih kéuih gaau yāt tòhng** — I'm teaching a class for him

1	**Dáng ngóh bōng léih . . .**	Let me . . . for you
2	**Kéuih heung ngóh . . .**	He . . . to me
3	**Dī chāuchīk doih kéuih**	The relatives . . . on his behalf
4	**Yīsāng bōng ngóh . . .**	The surgeon . . . for me
5	**Gó go hohksāang gān ngóh . . .**	That student . . . with me
6	**Nī jēung hóibou yuhng làih . . .**	This poster is for . . .
7	**Fuhmóuh waihjó jáiléui . . .**	Parents . . . for their children's sake
8	**Ngóh dī tùhngsih dahng ngóh . . .**	My colleagues are . . . for me
9	**Kéuih sèhngyaht deui-jyuh ngóh . . .**	He always . . . to my face
10	**Kéuih pùih ngóh . . .**	He accompanies me . . .

Exercise 11.3

Add a second verb phrase to specify the purpose of the action (**jouh**, **làih** or **heui** may be added):

Example: **Ngóhdeih yuhng chín *(làih/heui) máaih sìhgaan***
We use money (to buy time)

1 **Kéuih wán jek geuk . . .**
He uses his foot . . .

2 **A-Yīng yuhng sānsīn sénigwó . . .**
Ying uses fresh fruit . . .
3 **Gaausauh béi sìhgaan ngóhdeih . . .**
The professor gave us time . . .
4 **Kéuihdeih heui leuhtsī-làuh . . .**
They went to the solicitors . . .
5 **Dī geijé làih Hēunggóng . . .**
The reporters came to Hong Kong
6 **Léih m̀h hóu yuhng sāp bou . . .**
Don't use a wet cloth . . .
7 **Go behngyàhn múih go láihbaai dōu heui yīyún . . .**
The patient goes to the hospital every week . . .
8 **Dī chānchīk làih ngóhdeih ūkkéi . . .**
The relatives came to our house . . .
9 **Kéuih tēuijin ngóh heui daaihhohk . . .**
He recommended me to go to the university
10 **Ngóh fuhmóuh làih ngóh sūkse . . .**
My parents are coming to my hall of residence . . .

UNIT TWELVE
Aspect markers

Cantonese has a rich system of aspect markers which describe how events take place in time, offering different perspectives even on the same event. The major aspect markers **jó** and **gwo**, **gán** and **jyuh** have been introduced in *Basic Cantonese* (Units 18–19). Here we focus on some other aspect markers which express further nuances of time and action.

The delimitative aspect: háh

The aspect **háh** (sometimes termed delimitative or tentative) means to do something 'for a little while':

Mgōi béi ngóh tái-háh	Please let me have a look
Ngóh chēut heui hàahng-háh	I'm going out for a walk
Léih si-háh yuhng lī jek sái-tàuh-séui ā	Try using this shampoo (for a while)

This meaning is idiomatically reinforced by the particle **sīn** which literally means 'first':

Ngóh yiu táu-háh sīn	I need to take a little rest
Dáng ngóh lám-háh sīn	Let me think for a moment

Some verbs can also be reduplicated together with **háh** to express an even more tentative action:

wáan play	→ **wáan-háh**	play for a while	→	**wáan-wáan-háh** just play around
gú guess	→ **gú-háh**	have a guess	→	**gú-gú-háh** have a (tentative) guess

si try	→ **si-háh**	have a try	→ **si-si-háh** have a (tentative) try

For example, with the 'down-playing' particle **je**:

Lī go baahnfaat ngóh si-si-háh ge je
I'm just trying out this method

Kéuih tùhng go léuihyán wáan-wáan-háh ge ja
He's just playing around with that woman

Such reduplicated forms (verb–verb–**háh**) are also used in subordinate clauses, followed by another clause expressing a consequence or subsequent event:

Ngóh lám-lám-háh, dōu haih mhóu la
After thinking about it for a while, it's not a good idea

Kéuih hàahng-hàahng-háh gāai, faatgok mgin-jó go sáu-dói
After walking for a while she discovered she had lost her handbag

Kéuihdeih kīng-kīng-háh, sīn jīdou yùhnlòih daaihgā haih jūnghohk tùhnghohk
Only after chatting for a while did they find out they were secondary-school classmates

Ngóh fan-fan-háh jauh séng-jó
After sleeping for a while I woke up

A third format repeats both the verb and the suffix **háh**, where the reduplication reflects a meaning of repetition:

Kéuih góng-yéh jaht-háh-jaht-háh	When he talks he keeps stuttering
Jáan dāng jáam-háh jáam-háh	The light keeps flickering

There are also some idiomatic expressions of this form, like **saahp-háh-saahp-háh** (which cannot be reduced to **saahp-háh**):

Léih sèhng jīu saahp-háh-saahp-háh, haih-maih fan m̀h séng a?
You have been in a muddle all morning. Haven't you woken up yet?

Verb-yāt-verb

This combination with **yāt** 'one' (corresponding to verb-**yi**-verb in Mandarin) resembles the verbal classifier phrase (Unit 8) except that the verb here serves as its own classifier.

tái look → **tái-yāt-tái** take a look
jáam ngáahn blink → **jáam-yāt-jáam ngáahn** blink for a moment

The meaning is similar to that of **háh** as illustrated above:

Kéuih jāang yàhn hóu dō chín, lám-jyuh heui Oumún bok-yāt-bok
He owes people a lot of money, so he's thinking of going to Macau for a gamble

Līdouh yāt chīn mān, léih sóu-yāt-sóu ā (or **léih sóu-háh**)
Here's a thousand dollars; you can count it

In fast speech this sequence is often contracted so that **yāt** is not audible, resulting in a high rising tone on the first verb (see Unit 3):

bok-yāt-bok → **bók-bok** gamble, take a risk
chaat-yāt-chaat → **cháat-chaat** rub for a while

Verb-léuhng-verb

A variant with **léuhng** 'two' instead of **yāt** 'one', this tends to have a negative or dismissive connotation:

Kéuih m̀h gwaan chau-jái; chau-léuhng-chau jauh m̀h chau
She's not used to taking care of children; she tries for a while then gives up

Bún syū tái-léuhng-tái jauh móuh sām-gēi tái-lohk-heui
After reading this book for a while one has no inclination to go on

Lī deui hàaih jeuk-léuhng-jeuk jauh laahn-jó
These shoes have fallen apart after being worn for a short while

The same construction can also describe accomplishing something with a minimum of time and effort:

Lī go jái gam síng, duhk-léuhng-duhk jauh yahp saai lóuh
This child is so bright, he studies a bit and it's all there in his head

Kéuih cháau-léuhng-cháau jauh jaahn-jó géi baak maahn
After a brief bout of speculation she earned a few million dollars

The habitual aspect: hōi

The aspect **hōi** generally has a habitual meaning:

Ngóhdeih jouh-hōi lī hòhng	We've been in this profession for some time
Kéuih yuhng-hōi gó jek pàaihjí	He regularly uses that brand

This sense commonly appears in relative clauses (see Unit 18):

Ngóhdeih wán-hōi gó go jōngsāu sīfú taai mòhng
The decorator we usually deal with is too busy

Kéuihdeih jyuh-hōi gódouh hóu fōngbihn
Where they've been living is very convenient

Less commonly, in subordinate clauses, **hōi** may have a progressive meaning, indicating continuation of an activity that has already begun:

Ngóhdeih hàahng-hōi lībihn, bātyùh heui màaih Sìhdoih Gwóngchèuhng lo
Now that we're already walking this way, let's go on to Times Square

Góng-hōi kéuihdeih léuhng go, gauging yáuh-móuh lèih-fān a?
Talking of these two, have they actually got divorced?

Góng-hōi yauh góng ā . . . (idiom)
Talking of that, . . .

The inchoative héi-séuhng-làih

The phrase **héi-séuhng-làih** literally means 'rise up' but after a verb it denotes the beginning of an action (an inchoative meaning, corresponding fairly closely to **qǐlái** in Mandarin).

Go bìhbī daht-yìhu-gāan haam héi-séuhng-làih
The baby suddenly started to cry

It is most characteristically used in subordinate clauses, for example with **yāt** meaning 'as soon as':

Ngóh yāt lāu héi-séuhng-làih jauh lyúu gam laauh yàhn
As soon as I get angry I scold people indiscriminately

When used with a transitive verb or verb–object compound (Unit 6), the sequence **héi . . . séuhng-làih** is split up, with **héi** coming between the verb and object:

Ngóh go jái (yāt) faat-héi-pèihhéi séuhng-làih hóuchíh jek lóuhfú gám
Once my son gets angry, he's like a tiger

Kéuih dá-héi móhng-kàuh séuhng-làih sèhng go Jēung Dāk-pùih gám
Once he's playing tennis he's a real Michael Chang

The continuative lohk-heui

The combination **lohk-heui** literally means 'go down', as when it is used following a verb of motion:

hàahng lohk-heui walk down   **dit lohk-heui** fall down

Much as **héi-séuhng-làih** 'come up' can indicate inception of an action, **lohk-heui** (like **xiàqù** in Mandarin) following a verb can also express continuation:

Msái joi góng lohk-heui la	There's no need to go on talking
Joi siht lohk-heui jauh m̀h dihm la	If we go on losing (money) we'll be in trouble

This combination can combine with the potential **m̀h dóu**:

Ngóh ngàaih m̀h dóu lohk-heui la
I can't go on suffering

Ngóhdeih gám yéung jouh m̀h dóu lohk-heui
We can't go on working like this

The particle chān

The particle **chān** also has two distinct meanings:

i Habitual: 'every time' (only in subordinate clauses)

Kéuih làih chān ngóh ūkkéi dōu daai màaih jek gáu
Every time she comes to my house she brings the dog along

Lī go beisyū hōi-chān-wúi dōu jóu jáu
Whenever there's a meeting this secretary leaves early

Because it involves quantification (meaning 'every time'), this requires the adverb **dōu** before the main verb (see Unit 15).

ii Adversative (to one's misfortune, whether physical or psychological):

dit chān fall over — **láahng chān** catch a cold

Ga chē jong chān jek gáu	The car bumped into a dog
Kéuih cháai chān ngóh	He stepped on me (my foot)

Verbs with **chān** can typically be used as either transitive or intransitive verbs:

Transitive	*Intransitive*
Lóuhbáan haak chān kéuih	**Kéuih haak chān**
The boss scared him	He was scared
Tou hei muhn chān kéuih	**Kéuih hóu faai muhn chān**
The film bored her	She quickly became bored

Also with the affected body part as object:

Ngóh hám chān go tàuh	I bumped my head
Kéuih jíng chān jek geuk	He hurt his leg/foot
Léih dan chān tìuh méih-lùhng-gwāt àh?	Did you hurt your spine?

With its adversative meaning, **chān** goes naturally with the passive (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 21):

Active	*Passive*
Lóuhbáan gīk chān kéuih	**Kéuih béi lóuhbáan gīk chān**
The boss angered him	He was angered by the boss

Jek mān ngáanh chān ngóh	**Ngóh béi jek mān ngáauh chān**
The mosquito has bitten me	I've been bitten by a mosquito

Exercise 12.1

Add an aspect marker (**háh** or **hōi**) to the sentences given to produce the meaning specified in the translation.

Example: **Ngóhdeih ūkkéi jyú Jūnggwok choi**
We (regularly) cook Chinese food at home
→ **Ngóhdeih ūkkéi jyú-hōi Jūnggwok choi**

1	**Ngóh yiu kāp sānsīn hūng-hei**	I need to get some fresh air (for a while)
2	**Ngóh sīnsāang chē ngóh fāan-gūng**	My husband (normally) drives me to work
3	**Léih yiu jyuyi léih ge gihnhōng**	You need to pay attention to your health (for a while)
4	**Ngóh jyuh līdàuh, m̀h séung būn**	I'm (used to) living here and don't want to move
5	**Ngóhdeih heui Hói-yèuhng Gūngyún wáan**	We're going to have (a bit of) fun at Ocean Park
6	**Léih gú ngóh géi dō seui ā**	(Have a) guess how old I am
7	**Kéuih jā Yidaaihleih páau-chē**	He (regularly) drives an Italian sports car
8	**Léih yīnggōi gói léih ge waaih jaahpgwaan**	You should change your habits (a bit)
9	**Kéuih jeuk mìhng-pàaih sāam**	She (normally) wears designer clothes
10	**Ngóhdeih heui tòuhsyūgwún chāamgwūn sìn**	Let's go to the library to (have a) look around

Exercise 12.2

Use **háh** to express the same idea as the reduplicated forms given.

Example: **Dáng ngóh wán-yāt-wán sīn** Let me take a quick look
→ **Dáng ngóh wán-háh sīn**

1	**Léih yiu lihn-yāt-lihn lī sáu gō**	You need to practise this song
2	**Léih heui mahn-yāt-mahn lā**	Go and ask
3	**Léih si-yāt-si gihn sāam sīn**	Try on this blouse

4 **Ngóh yiu lám-yāt-lám sīn** I need to think about it for a while
5 **Mgōi léih dáng-yāt-dáng sīu lā** Please wait a moment
6 **Ngóhdeih táu-yāt-táu sīn** Let's have a rest
7 **Léih màhn-yāt-màhn dī hēungséui ā** Smell the perfume
8 **Faai dī maat-yāt-maat faai mihn lā** Wipe your face quickly

Exercise 12.3

Use reduplication and **háh** or **léuhng** to express the meaning suggested.

Example: **Kéuih fan _____ _____ dihnwá jauh héung laak**
She'd been sleeping for a while when the phone rang
→ **Kéuih fan-fan-háh dihnwá jauh héung laak**

1 **Ga gēi yuhng _____ _____ jauh waaih-jó**
The machine broke down after being used once or twice
2 **Pīn mán gói _____ _____ jauh gói hóu la**
The essay was corrected in a jiffy
3 **Kéuih góng _____ _____ dihnwá, yáuh yàhn hāau-mùhn**
Somebody knocked on the door while he was talking on the phone
4 **Kéuih sihk _____ _____ faahn dahtyìhn wàhn-jó**
She suddenly fainted while eating
5 **Kéuih sé _____ _____ jauh sé hóu la**
He wrote it up in no time
6 **Gihn baahk sēutsāam jeuk _____ _____ jauh wūjōu-jó**
The white shirt got dirty after being worn once or twice
7 **Go hohksāang séuhng _____ _____ tòhng fan-jeuhk-jó**
The student fell asleep while attending a class
8 **Jēung chòhng fan _____ _____ jauh laahn-jó**
The bed broke after being slept in a few times
9 **Ngóhdeih jyuh _____ _____ faatgok gāan ūk lauh séui**
Having lived here for a while we discovered that the house leaks
10 **Síu-tàih-kàhm, kéuih lāai _____ _____ jauh m̀h lāai**
She played the violin for a while, then gave up

Exercise 12.4

Use **héi ... séuhng-làih** or **lohk-heui** to give the meaning suggested in brackets.

Example: **Ngóhdeih juhng hóyíh kīng**
We can still (carry on) chat(ting)
→ **Ngóhdeih juhng hóyíh kīng lohk-heui**

1 **Kéuih siu góján go yéung hóu tìhm**
Once (she starts) smiling, she looks sweet
2 **Ngóh m̀h hóyíh joi ngàaih**
I can't (go on) suffer(ing) any more
3 **Tīnhei jyun, hóu yùhngyih behng**
(Once) the weather (starts to) change, it's easy to get ill
4 **Léihdeih joi chòuh ngóh jauh giu gíngchaat làih**
If you carry on making so much noise, I'll call the police
5 **Seui-gúk chàh-seui jauh màhfàahn**
(Once) the tax office starts investigating one's taxes it's troublesome
6 **Gám yéung aau móuh yuhng**
It's no use (to continue) arguing this way
7 **Ngóhdeih kyutdihng m̀h dáng**
We decided not to (go on) wait(ing)
8 **Kéuih yāt chī-sin māt dōu jouh dāk chēut**
Once he becomes crazy, he's capable of doing anything
9 **Kéuihdeih aai-gāau go-go dōu hóu mhōisām**
When they (start to) quarrel, everybody is unhappy
10 **Ngóh sé m̀h dóu**
I can't (go on) writ(e)(ing)

Exercise 12.5

Form sentences using **chān** with an adversative or habitual sense.

Example: He angered (**gīk**) me
→ **Kéuih gīk chān ngóh**
Whenever we go to Guangzhou, we stay in this hotel
→ **Ngóhdeih heui chān Gwóngjāu, dōu jyuh nī gāan jáudim**

1 She fell over (**dit**) again
2 I twisted (**láu**) my foot
3 Whenever it rains (**lohk-yúh**), the house gets very wet (**sāp**)
4 I got trodden on (**cháai**)
5 The child tripped up (**pūk**)
6 Every time he drinks (**yám-jáu**) he gets drunk (**jeui**)
7 We got burnt (**saai**) in the sun
8 Every time he takes the exam (**háau-sih**) he fails (**m̀h hahpgaak**)
9 Don't starve (**ngoh**) the baby
10 Whenever he sees (**tái**) that film, he cries (**haam**)

UNIT THIRTEEN
Comparisons

In *Basic Cantonese* (Unit 12) we introduced comparisons using **gwo** and **béi** with adjectives:

Kéuih lēk gwo ngóh	She's cleverer than me (colloquial)
Kéuih béi ngóh chūngmìhng	She's cleverer than me (formal)
Ngóh taaitáai jaahn dāk dō gwo ngóh	My wife earns more than me
Ngóh taaitáai béi ngóh jaahn dāk dō	My wife earns more than me

Here we look at more complicated cases such as:

- comparisons based on verbs
- negating and questioning comparisons
- comparisons of similarity

We also look at expressions of excess for both adjectives and verbs.

Comparisons with verbs

While comparisons with adjectives use **gwo**, those with verbs generally require **dō gwo** 'more than':

Ngóh sihk dō gwo léih	I eat more than you
Ngóh jūngyi léih dō gwo (jūngyi) kéuih	I like you more than (I like) her

This can also be used to contrast two different activities:

Léih tái hei juhng dō gwo ngóh tái syū
You watch films even more than I read books

Ngóh oi kéuih dō gwo hahn kéuih
I love him more than I hate him

Similarly, **síu gwo** after a verb phrase gives the meaning 'less than':

Ngóh sihk síu gwo léih	I eat less than you
Gūngsī gām-lín siht dāk síu gwo gauh-lín	The company lost less this year than last year

Negative and interrogative comparisons

Comparisons in the form of negative statements and questions respectively can be formed with **móuh** and its question form, **yáuh-móuh**, together with **gam** 'as':

Ngóh móuh léih gam yáuh-seunsām
I'm not as confident as you (are)

Kéuih yáuh-móuh léih gam lengjái a?
Is he as good-looking as you?

This pattern also works for stative verbs (see Unit 7):

Ngóh móuh léih gam jūngyi yàuh-séui
I don't like swimming as much as you do

Yáuh-móuh léih mùihmúi gam gēng háau-síh a?
Are you as afraid of exams as your sister?

For interrogative comparisons a simpler structure is often preferred, using **dihng** 'or' (see Unit 17) and the comparative **dī** (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 12):

Waìhjān pèhng dī dihng Gwoktaai pèhng dī a?
Which is cheaper, Virgin or Cathay?

Sān gēichèuhng dihng gauh gēichèuhng fōngbihn dī a?
Which is more convenient, the old airport or the new one?

béihéi

The word **béihéi** is required when adding a comparison as an afterthought to a statement that has already been made:

Kéuih gaau dāk géi hóu, béihéi kèihtā yàhn
He teaches quite well, compared with the others

Gām chi syun faai . . . béihéi seuhng chi làih góng
This time it went quickly . . . compared to last time

Note the addition of **làih góng**, literally 'come to speak (of it)'. See also Unit 25 for similar afterthoughts.

Comparisons of similarity

yāt yeuhng, literally 'one and the same' can be used to express similarity:

Kéuih (tùhng léih) yāt yeuhng gam kùhng
(*lit.* he (with you) one same so poor)
He's just as hard up (as you are)

chā-m-dō, literally 'differing not much', is used generically to make approximations:

Kéuih tùhng léih chā-m-dō (gam gōu)
(*lit.* he with you about (as tall))
He's about the same (height) as you

Note the use of **tùhng** 'with' specifying the standard of comparison in these constructions. **hóuchíh** is a verb meaning 'resemble' (or 'seem') which works together with **gam** in expressions of similarity:

Yùhgwó hóuchíh léih gam hahngfūk jauh hóu la!
If (I) were as fortunate as you that would be fine!

Léih gwú ngóh hóuchíh lóuhbáan gam gūhòhn mē?
Do you think I'm as much of a miser as the boss?

jeuhn 'as . . . as possible'

The word **jeuhn** (*lit.* 'exhaust') forms adverbial phrases with a superlative sense:

jeuhn faai	as quickly as possible
jeuhn jóu	as soon as possible
jeuhn lihk	with as much effort as possible
jeuhn leuhng	as far as possible, to the best of one's ability

These serve as adverbs:

Ngóhdeih wúih jeuhn faai tūngjī léih
We'll let you know as quickly as possible

Ngóh wúih jeuhn leuhng bōng-sáu
I'll do my best to help

Excess

The most straightforward expression of excess is **taai**, which corresponds closely to Mandarin **tài** and English 'too':

Dī tōng taai yiht	The soup is too hot
Léih jā dāk taai faai	You're driving too fast

Another alternative is **taai gwo** which gives emphasis by combining **taai** and **gwo**:

taai gwo gáandāan	much too simple

While **taai** is neutral in terms of register as well as intensity, other idiomatic and more distinctively Cantonese terms are **dāk jaih** and **gwotàuh**:

Kéuih góng dāk faai dāk jaih	He's speaking a bit too fast
Dī tōng yiht gwotàuh	The soup is too hot

With verbs, the corresponding expression is **gwolùhng**:

fan gwolùhng	oversleep
jyú gwolùhng	overcook
sek gwolùhng	spoil (a child) to death

gihk douh 'exceedingly' is a formal expression:

gihk douh fūkjaahp	exceedingly complicated
gihk douh húnggeuih	exceedingly fearful

Exercise 13.1

Refute the following comparisons by using a negative comparison.

Example: **Háaih gwai gwo lùhng-hā**	Crab is more expensive than lobster
→ **Háaih móuh lùhng-hā gam gwai**	Crab is not as expensive as lobster

1	**Héi-kehk hóu-tái gwo bēi-kehk**	Comedy is more fun to watch than tragedy
2	**Hahtīu chèuhng gwo dūngtīn**	Summer is longer than winter
3	**Yīsāng mòhng gwo wuhsih**	Doctors are busier than nurses
4	**Náuyeuk jitjau faai gwo Hēunggóng**	New York's pace is faster than Hong Kong's
5	**Lihksí-haih yùhngyih yahp gwo jithohk-haih**	The history department is easier to get into than the philosophy department
6	**Wohnggok bīk-yàhn gwo Jīmsājéui**	Mongkok is more crowded than Tsimshatsui

Exercise 13.2

Ask questions to compare the elements stated.

A: using **dī**

Example: **hùhng sīk** red vs. **wòhng sīk** yellow: **seuhn-ngáahn** pleasing to the eyes
Hùhng sīk dihng wòhng sīk seuhn-ngáahn dī a? Is red or yellow more pleasing to the eyes?

1 **dīksí** taxi vs. **fóchē** train: **faai** fast
2 **gātìhng** family vs. **sihyihp** career: **juhngyiu** important
3 **Jūng yeuhk** Chinese medicine vs. **sāi yeuhk** Western medicine: **yáuh-haauh** effective
4 **daap-fēigēi** flying vs. **daap-syùhn** taking the boat: **syūfuhk** comfortable
5 **duhk-syū** study vs. **jouh-yéh** work: **sānfú** demanding

B: using **yáuh-móuh**

Example: **yúhyìhnhohk** linguistics vs. **màhnhohk** literature: **làahn** difficult
Yúhyìhnhohk yáuh-móuh màhnhohk gam làahn a? Is linguistics as difficult as literature?

6 **go léui** the daughter vs. **go jái** the son: **pa-cháu** shy

7 **tái dihnsih** watch television vs. **hàahng-gūngsī** shopping: **sāai-sìhgaau** time-consuming
8 **Seuhnghói** Shanghai vs. **Bākgīng** Beijing: **yúhn** far
9 **Jūngdaaih** Chinese University vs. **Góngdaaih** Hong Kong University: **yáuh-méng** famous
10 **fōwaahn pín** science fiction films vs. **húngbou pín** horror films: **chigīk** thrilling

Exercise 13.3

Add an appropriate expression of excess in place of **hóu**:

Example: **Kéuih ūkkéi hóu yúhn** It's a long way to his house
→ **Kéuih ūkkéi yúhn dāk jaih** It's a bit far to his house

1	**Dī gāsī hóu pèhng**	The furniture is (too) cheap
2	**Chau-jái hóu sānfú**	Taking care of children is (too) hard work
3	**Kéuih jyú ge sung hóu hàahm**	The dishes she cooks are (too) salty
4	**Yìuhgwán ngohk hóu chòuh**	Rock music is (too) noisy
5	**Kéuih hàahng dou hóu guih**	He gets (too) tired as a result of walking
6	**Hēunggóng bin dāk hóu faai**	Hong Kong changes (too) quickly
7	**Jingfú taaidouh hóu kèuhng-ngaahn**	The government's attitude is (excessively) firm
8	**Kéuih làaih-láai hóu làahn fuhksih**	Her mother-in-law is (too) hard to please
9	**Ngóh ūkkéi ge mahntàih hóu fūkjaahp**	My family's problems are (too) complicated
10	**Sīnsāang góng ge yéh hóu sām-ou**	What the teacher said is (extremely) profound

UNIT FOURTEEN

Resultative and causative sentences with **dou**

Resultative sentences denote the state resulting from an action (usually a verb) or the extent of a certain state (usually an adjective). They are formed with **dou**, one of the grammatical words with many functions which are crucial to Cantonese grammar. As a verb in its own right, **dou** means 'arrive', 'reach', and also goes with other verbs to form verb-particle units like **sāu dou** 'receive'. **dou** also serves to introduce the state of affairs resulting from an event, which may be seen as an extension of the core meaning of 'getting to', 'reaching a certain state or point'. The nearest equivalent of this **dou** in English is 'until', and indeed in some cases **dou** simply means 'until':

Yāt dím jūng dáng dou sāam dím (from one of Faye Wong's songs)
(*lit.* one o'clock wait till three o'clock)
Wait from one until three o'clock

dou **with verbs**

The resultative meaning of **dou** is 'to the point of . . .' as we see here:

Ngóh góng dou móuh saai hei
(*lit.* I talk till no all breath)
I talked till I had no breath left

A-Lìhng sēui dou yàhn-yàhn dōu ngāak
(*lit.* Ling bad till everyone all cheat)
Ling is so bad that she'll cheat anyone

In the clause following **dou**, the subject is omitted if it is the same as that of the main verb:

Same subject:

Kéuih guih dou hàahng m̀h yūk	(not ***Kéuih guih dou kéuih**
(*lit.* s/he tired till walk not move)	**hàahng m̀h yūk**)
S/he was so tired that s/he couldn't move	

Different subject:

Kéuihdeih chòuh dou ngóh jouh m̀h dóu yéh
(*lit.* they noisy till I work not manage things)
They're making so much noise that I can't get any work done

dou with adjectives

Since adjectives and verbs generally behave alike in Cantonese (see Unit 7), it is no surprise that we can use **dou** with adjectives as well as with verbs. Especially productive is (adjective) **dou séi** 'to death' with adjectives of emotive evaluation, typically where negative evaluation is involved:

gēng dou séi	scared to death
wahtdaht dou séi	really ugly, gross
lyuhn dou séi	really messy
gwai dou séi	really expensive
tìhm/syūn/fú/laaht dou séi	really sweet/sour/bitter/hot (e.g. of food)

While the emphatic meaning of **dou séi** is also applicable to positive evaluation, others such as **dou fēihéi** ('to the point of taking off') and **dou wàhn** ('to the point of dizziness') are often more idiomatic:

Go sailouh-léui dākyi dou séi	The little girl is dead attractive
Gihn sāam leng dou séi/dou wàhn	The blouse is dead gorgeous
Kéuih go jái lēk dou séi/dou fēihéi	His son is fiendishly smart

. . . dou jeuhn 'to the full', 'to the limit' often appears in colloquial expressions:

hok dou jeuhn	do one's utmost, e.g. win the game, work hard
je dou jeuhn	borrow to the limit
syū/yèhng dou jeuhn	win/lose everything
wáan dou jeuhn	play to the full
wāi dou jeuhn	super cool

For example:

Gām chi kéuihdeih ló saai sei go jéung jānhaih wāi dou jeuhn la
(*lit.* this time they got all four prizes really cool to the limit)
This time they got all four prizes; they're super cool

A common use of these phrases is as an answer to questions of the type **... sèhng dím a?** 'to what extent?'

A: **Lóuhbáan lāu sèhng dím a?**
How angry is the boss? (i.e. what's the extent of the boss's anger?)
B: **Lāu dou sihk m̀h lohk faahn lō**
So angry that he can't eat anything
A: **A-Lìhng lēk sèhng dím a?**
How smart is Ling?
B: **Lēk dou léih m̀h seun**
(*lit.* smart till you not believe)
Incredibly smart

Finally, **dou** can be left 'stranded' with the complement clause omitted but implied:

Kéuih faai dou ā ...	He's so fast
Kéuih lēk dou lē ...	She's so smart, you know

This gives the effect of being left speechless, with the particle drawn out for emphasis.

Verb copying with transitive verbs

If the verb has an object, the verb has to be repeated before the **dou**-phrase:

Ngóh laauh kéuih laauh dou bá sēng dōu sā-jó
(*lit.* I scold him scold till the voice all hoarse)
I scolded him till my voice was hoarse

Kéuih gēng lóuhpòh gēng dou m̀h gám fāan ūkkéi
(*lit.* he fear wife fear till not dare return home)
He's so afraid of his wife that he dare not go home

Kéuih jouh-yéh jouh dou waih tung
She worked so hard that she got stomach ache

This verb copying also applies to adverbial constructions with **dāk** (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 10).

dou with causative verbs

The main causative constructions use **dou** as used in resultative sentences. **dou**-phrases combine with a number of causative verbs such as **jíng** 'make'. These have almost the same meaning but are given here in increasing order of formality: **gáau** and **jíng** are colloquial, while **lihng** and **sái** are more formal.

Dímgáai gāan fóng gáau dou gam lyuhn ga?
(*lit.* why the room make till so messy)
Why is the room so messy (as a result of somebody's wilful action)?

Kéuihdeih sèhngyaht dá màhjéuk jíng dou ngóh fan m̀h dóu
(*lit.* they always play mahjong make till I cannot sleep)
Their playing mahjong prevents me from sleeping

Syūbaahkdahk ge yāmngohk lihng dou yàhn sām kong sàhn yìh
(*lit.* Schubert's music cause till people heart enlarged spirit content)
Schubert's music is uplifting to the human heart and spirit

Sīusīk sái dou tàuhjī-jé yahp sìh (financial report)
(*lit.* news cause investor enter market)
The news has made investors enter the market

A formal, literary way of expressing causation is the verb **douhji**:

Léuhng paai ge daujāng douhji tàahmpun po-liht (news report)
(*lit.* two parties' struggle cause negotiation break)
The struggle between the two parties caused the negotiations to break down

These causative constructions are important as they are used to express several concepts which are expressed by transitive verbs in English, such as 'please', 'excite', 'embarrass' and 'disappoint':

Kéuih séung lihng dou lóuhbáan hōisām jē
(*lit.* he wants make till boss happy only)
He just wants to please his boss

Go bougou lihug dou ngóh hóu hīngfáhu
(*lit.* the report makes till I very excited)
The report excited me (made me excited)

Kéuih góug ge yéh jíng dou ngóh hóu mhóuyisi
The things he said embarrassed me (made me embarrassed)

Ngóh m̀h séung lihng dou kéuih sātmohug
I don't want to disappoint her (make her disappointed)

Léih go behug lihng dou ugóh hóu dāamsām
Your illness had me very worried

†Inverted resultative sentences

A particular version of the resultative/causative construction with **dou** involves a kind of inversion of the verb and its logical subject. As an alternative to i we can have ii:

i **Kàhm-máahn ngóh góng dou hóu gīkhei**
(*lit.* last night I talked till very angry)
Last night I talked and (as a result) got very angry

ii **Kàhmmáahn góng dou ngóh hóu gīkhei**
(*lit.* last night talked till I very angry)
Last night I talked and (as a result) got very angry

This amounts to making **ngóh** the subject of the **dou**-clause rather than the main clause. Based on the inverted construction ii, we can even have the logical object of the verb at the beginning of the sentence. This object is then seen as the cause of the event:

Pīn mán tái dou Mìhng-jái ngáahn tung
(*lit.* the paper read till Ming boy's eyes hurt)
Reading the paper makes Ming's eyes hurt

Gām jīu dī Yīng-sīk jóuchāan sihk dou ngóhdeih bāau saai
(*lit.* this morning's English style breakfast eat till we full all)
This morning's English breakfast filled us all up

Dī gúpiu siht dou ngóh pā háidouh
(*lit.* the shares lose till I crawl here)
Losing on shares has brought me to the ground

Some similar sentences are also possible without **dou**:

Dī gāsī sái-jō ngóh sahp maahn mān
This furniture cost me one hundred thousand dollars

Lī tìuh sósìh wán-jó ngóh sèhng máahn
(*lit.* this key search me an entire evening)
It took me an entire evening to look for this key

Bún baatgwa jaahpji tái-jó kéuih sèhng go hahjau
(*lit.* the gossip magazine read her whole afternoon)
Reading the gossip magazine took up her whole afternoon

Lī go jōng fa-jó ngóh léuhng go jūng
(*lit.* this make-up spent me two hours)
This make-up session took two hours

Gāmmáahn chāan faahn jyú-jó kéuihdeih sèhng yaht
(*lit.* tonight dinner cook them whole day)
It took a whole day to cook tonight's dinner

Dī hùhngchàuh-gú siht-jó kéuih yāt baak maahn
(*lit.* the red chip shares lost him a million)
The red chip shares made him lose a million

Exercise 14.1

Form sentences using **dou**:
A: to indicate the extent of the following psychological states:

Example:
Emotion: **gámduhng dou . . . haam héi séuhng làaih**
so moved . . . that (she) began to cry

1 Happiness: **hōisām dou . . .**
2 Fear: **gēng dou . . .**
3 Anger: **lāu dou . . .**
4 Frustration: **mángjáng dou . . .**
5 Comfort: **syūfuhk dou . . .**

B: to describe things:

1 The sea view: **Go hói-gíng leng dou . . .**
2 A house: **Gāau ūk gōnjehng dou . . .**

3 A picture: **Fūk wá daaih dou . . .**
4 Summer in Hong Kong: **Hēunggóng hahtīu yiht dou . . .**
5 A rich person: **Kéuih dī chín dō dou . . .**

Exercise 14.2

Advertise your products as follows:

Example: **Nī go sān chitgai gūnglàhng dō dou sóu ǹh saai**
This new design has too many functions to count

1 A new medicine: **Nī jek yeuhk lihng dou** (makes you) . . .
2 Prizes in a raffle: **Ngóhdeih ge jéungbáu dō dou . . .**
3 A television programme: **Nī go jitmuhk jīngchói** (this programme is so fabulous) **dou . . .**
4 A restaurant: **Ngóhdeih jáulàuh ge dím-sām** (our restaurant's dim sum) **sihk dou . . .**
5 A book: **Sung Fūyàhn** (Madam Sung) **dī syū maaih** (are selling) **dou . . .**

Exercise 14.3

Answer the question using **dou** to indicate the extent of the situation.
Try to be as informative and detailed as possible in elaborating the extent clause.

Example: **Jēung gēipiu pèhng sèhng dím a?**
Just how cheap is the air ticket?
Pèhng dou léih ǹh seun!
So cheap that you wouldn't believe it

1	**Jáan dāng gwai sèhng dím a?**	Just how expensive is the lamp?
2	**Kéuihdeih go yéung chíh sèhng dím a?**	Just how alike are they?
3	**Jek gáu behng sèhng dím a?**	How sick is the dog?
4	**Go yīsāng yī kéuih yī sèhng dím a?**	How's the doctor's treatment going?
5	**Kéuih ga chē béi ga fochē johng sèhng dím a?**	How badly was the car damaged by the lorry?
6	**Léih hohk Jūngmán hohk sèhng dím a?**	How's your Chinese doing?
7	**Léih taai-táai lāu sèhng dím a?**	How angry is your wife?

8 **Léih gú kéuih mòhng sèhng dím a?** Guess how busy he is?

†Exercise 14.4

Use **dou** to show that the the second clause expresses a result of the first. Begin the sentence with the italicized object.

Ngóh yám dī tōng I drank the soup . . . **sèhng sān hohn** sweat all over
→ **Dī tōng yám dou ngóh sèhng sān hohn**
Drinking the soup made me sweat all over

1 **Ngóh tái *fūng seun*** I read the letter . . . **hóu lāu** got angry
2 **Ngóh sé *pīn mán*** I wrote the paper . . . **ngāau saai tàuh** got confused
3 **Kéuih yám *jēun jáu*** he drank the wine . . . **jeui-jó** got drunk
4 **Ngóh jouh *go sahtyihm*** I did the experiment . . . **jauhlèih chīsin** almost crazy
5 **Ngóh fan *jēung chòhng*** I slept on the bed . . . **hóu msyūfuhk** uncomfortable
6 **Ngóh tái *go dihnsih*** I watched the television . . . **ngáahn fā** couldn't see clearly
7 **Kéuih tēng *gó dī gwái-gú*** He listened to those ghost stories . . . **fan m̀h dóu** can't sleep
8 **Kéuih sihk *nī dī yeuhk*** He took this medicine **wàhn-tòh-tòh** became dizzy

UNIT FIFTEEN
Quantification

Quantifiers express relative quantities such as 'all', 'many', 'few', and so on. In Cantonese they involve some special syntactic patterns and an important set of particles including **dōu**, **saai**, **màaih**, **dāk** and **tīm**.

All and every

The concept 'all' (universal quantification) can be expressed by:

a A reduplicated classifier, with or without the noun (see Unit 8):

gāan-gāan ūk	every house	**jek-jek duhngmaht**	every animal
go-go (yàhn)	everyone	**douh-douh**	everywhere

b **múih** 'each'

múih (go) yàhn	each person	**múih ga chē**	each car
múih gāan ūk	each house	**múih bún syū**	each book

c **só yáuh ge** 'all' (a formal alternative: see Unit 25)

só yáuh (ge) yàhn	everyone
só yáuh (ge) sihkmaht	all the food there is

When these expressions are used, two general rules should be observed:

i The adverb **dōu** is added before the verb:

Go-go dōu jaan kéuih	Everyone praises her
Múih gāan ūk dōu yáuh láahnghei	Each house has air conditioning
Só yáuh (ge) tùhngsih dōu yiu jéunsìh dou	All colleagues need to arrive on time

ii When the object of the sentence is quantified it must come before the verb:

Kéuih *douh-douh* dōu séuug heui	He wants to go everywhere
Gíngchaat *múih ga chē* dōu gímchàh-gwo	The police have inspected every car
Haauhjéuug *só yáuh ge sīnsāang* dōu gin-gwo	The principal has met all the teachers

The resulting word order (subject–object–verb) may be compared with the focus construction in Unit 9, where the word order is similar.

In addition to the quantifiers (a-c) above, numerals may be used together with **dōu** to mean 'both', 'all three', etc.:

Ngóhdeih *léuhng go* dōu heui	We're both going
Ngóh *sāam gihn* dōu jūngyi	I like all three (pieces of clothing)

Note again the position of the object before the verb.

Any

A question word such as **bīngo** 'who' together with the adverb **dōu** gives the meaning 'any' or 'every':

bīngo	who	**bīngo dōu**	anyone
māt(yéh)	what	**māt(yéh) dōu**	anything, everything
bīndouh	where	**bīndouh dōu**	anywhere

For example:

Bīngo dōu làih dāk	Anyone can come
Mātyéh dōu hóyíh faatsāng ge	Anything can happen

Again notice the position of the object which comes before the verb:

Gīngléih bīngo dōu háng giu	The manager is willing to see anyone
Hēunggóng mātyéh yàhu dōu yáuh	There are all sorts of people in Hong Kong

yahmhòh is a more formal expression for 'any':

Yahmhòh yīsāug dōu hóyíh jouh lī go sáuseuht
Any doctor can do this operation

Yahmhòh jaahn chín ge gēiwuih dōu m̀h hóyíh fonggwo
(*lit.* any earn money opportunity also can't let go)
One can't let go of any opportunity to make money

None

To express 'none', 'nothing', etc., we basically add a negative word to the constructions given above meaning 'every' and 'any':

Dúng Sāang bīngo dōu sīk	Mr Tung knows everyone
Dúng Sāang bīngo dōu m̀h sīk	Mr Tung doesn't know anyone
Ngóh māt(yéh) dōu jī	I know everything
Ngóh māt(yéh) dōu m̀h jī	I don't know anything
Kéuih māatyéh choi dōu sihk	She eats any kind of vegetable
Kéuih māatyéh choi dōu m̀h sihk	She doesn't eat any kind of vegetable

Many and much: dō/síu

The words **dō** and **síu** have several uses:

- with nouns:

Hóu dō yàhn lihn taaigihk	Many people practise tai chi
Béigaau síu yīsāng sīk yī lī go behng	Relatively few doctors know how to treat this disease

- as predicative adjectives:

Ngóhdeih ge mahntàih hóu dō	Our problems are many
Dī gau jīgaak ge sīnsāang taai síu	The qualified teachers are too few

- as verbs, when they can take the aspect marker **jó** to indicate a change in quantity, or even a meaning of excess (too many or too few):

Gāmyaht dō-jó géi go haak	There were a few more clients today
Jeuigahn síu-jó hóu dō yàuh-haak	There have been many fewer tourists lately
Dō-jó léuhng go hohksāang	There were two students too many
Síu-jó yāt go léihyàuh	There was one reason too few

These combinations can also be added to a verb, with a similar effect:

Ngóh waihháu m̀h hóu, sihk-síu-jó hóu dō yéh
My appetite is not good and I have eaten a lot less

Kéuih hyut-ngaat gōu, yám-síu-jó hóu dō jáu
He has high blood pressure and drinks a lot less

Léih chēut-dō-jó tìuh tàihmuhk
You set one question too many

Gūngsī sung-síu-jó yāt yeuhng yéh làih
The company delivered one thing too few

When used as adverbs, **dō dī** 'more' and **síu dī** 'less' typically come before the verb like other adverbs:

Ngóhdeih yīnggōi dō dī wahnduhng We should exercise more
or **Ngóhdeih yīnggōi wahnduhng dō dī**

Léih bātyùh síu dī màaihyun lā! Why don't you complain less often?
or **Léih bātyùh màaihyun síu dī lā!**

Particles of quantification saai and màaih, dāk and tīm

The particle **saai** offers an idiomatic alternative way to express the idea 'all'. It follows the verb like other verbal particles:

- With transitive verbs (referring to the object):

Ngóh yíhgīng dám saai dī gauh boují
I have already thrown away the old newspapers

Léih giu gam dō sung dím sihk dāk saai a?
You order so many dishes, how can we eat them up?

Yīsāng gāmjīu góng saai béi kéuih tēng la
The doctor told him everything this morning

Kéuih béi yàhn ngāak saai dī chín
He got cheated and as a result lost all the money

- With intransitive verbs (referring to the subject):

Dī geijé jáu saai la	The reporters have all left
Dī sailouhjái yātjóu jauh fan saai	The children have all gone to sleep early
Dī yú hóu faai séi saai	The fish all died quickly
Dī jēun dit saai lohk déi	The bottles all fell on the floor

- With adjectives (emphasizing quality):

  Móuh gin gam loih, léih sèhng go leng saai wo
  Haven't seen you for a long time, you've become prettier

  Dī fūng yāt chēui, léih dī tàuhfaat jauh lyuhn saai
  Once the wind blows, your hair becomes all messy

- With verb–object compounds and idioms (usually indicating a change of state):

  lé-he chaotic → **lé saai he** totally chaotic
  lèih-póu outrageous → **lèih-saai-póu** totally outrageous
  ngāau-saai-tàuh (*lit.* scratch one's head) brain-wrecking
  lyuhn saai hāang make a complete mess of things

Like other particles, **saai** can be used in combination with:

i The aspect markers **gwo** and **jyuh** (but not **jó**):

Ngóh wán-gwo saai lī tàuh ge daaih síu syū-dim ge la
I've searched all the big and small bookshops around here

Daaih-hohk kám-jyuh saai dī cháumàhn
The university is covering up all the scandals

Dī sailouh chòuh-jyuh saai ngóhdeih jouh-yéh
The children are preventing us from doing any work (by making a noise)

ii The comparative **gwo** (see Unit 13) and other particles such as **dóu**, **hóu** and **fāan**:

faai gwo saai yàhndeih	faster than everyone else
lēk gwo saai kèihtā hohksāang	cleverer than all the other students
Léih dī jīlíu ngóh sāu dóu saai	I received all your data
Go bougou sé hóu saai la	The report is all done
Go behngyàhn bóu fāan saai la wo	The patient has recovered completely

iii The potential construction in which the negative **m̀h** or the potential **dāk** is inserted between the verb and the particle (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 17):

Ngóhdeih sihk m̀h saai	We can't eat it all
Ngóhdeih sihk dāk saai	We can eat it all
Ngóhdeih sihk m̀h sihk dāk saai a?	Can we eat it all?

saai can also combine with other quantifiers such as **go-go dōu** and **māt(yéh) dōu**, thereby emphasizing the idea of totality:

Yùhgwó go-go dōu jáu saai, bīngo léih Hēunggóng a?
(from a pre-handover television advertisement)
If everyone leaves, who will care about Hong Kong?

Hēunggóng māt dōu bin saai sīk (from a film set in 1997)
Everything in Hong Kong is changing colour

The particle **màaih**, which resembles **saai** in several respects, has a number of meanings. As a verb it means 'to approach', as in **màaih ohn** 'approach the shore' and **màaih làih** 'come closer'. As a particle (following another verb) it can mean:

i 'close'; 'together'

Sāau màaih douh mùhn	Close the door
Yeuk màaih dī pàhngyáuh heui yám-chàh	Gather the friends together to have dim sum

ii 'in addition to all the rest'

Sihk màaih dī sung lā!
Let's eat up the food (in addition to what has already been eaten)

Ngóh taai-táai béi màaih ngóh ge wúifai
My wife paid my membership fees too (apart from her own fees)

Kéuihdeih daai màaih dī sailouh heui taam pàhngyáuh
They bring the children along to visit some friends

Often either **saai** or **màaih** can be used, with a subtle difference in meaning:

Ngóh yiu jouh saai dī yéh sīn fāan ūkkéi
I have to finish doing everything before I go home

Ngóh yiu jouh màaih dī yéh sīn fāan ūkkéi
I have to finish up a few more things before I go home

dāk 'only' applies to the following noun phrases in subject and object positions, usually with numerals:

Dāk sāam go hohksāang yáuh-hingcheui
Only three students are interested

Dāk kéuih geidāk sung sāangyaht láihmaht béi ngóh
Only she remembers to send me a birthday gift

Ngóh chàhmmáahn fan dāk yāt go jūng
I only slept one hour last night

Kéuih yāt go yuht jaahn dāk gó yāt maahn mān, síu-mh-síu dī a?
(from a film)
He only earns ten thousand dollars a month, isn't that too little?

If the verb has two objects, **dāk** comes after the verb, even when its meaning of 'only' applies to the second object:

Yihp gaausauh gaau dāk ngóh yāt go hohkkèih ja
Professor Yip only taught me for one term

Note that the particle **je/ja** with its meaning of 'playing down' goes naturally with **dāk**.

While **dāk** indicates that expectations have not been reached, **tīm** or **tìm** suggests that they have been exceeded. The high falling tone **tìm** is used at the end of a sentence (see Unit 2).

Dī tōng gam hóu meih, ngóh séung yám dō yāt wúu tìm
The soup's so tasty, I'd like to have another bowl

The meaning is often reinforced by the adverb **juhng** and/or the verbal particle **màaih**:

Kéuih yauh yáuh-jó, juhng wah mhaih yi-ngoih tìm!
She's pregnant again, and she says it's not an accident either!

Kéuih chéng ngóh sihk-faahn, juhng sung màaih ngóh fāan ūkkéi tìm
He took me to dinner and brought me back home too

Exercise 15.1

Insert **dōu** before the verb as follows:

Example: **Kéuih go-go hoksāang béi 'A' ge**
→ **Kéuih go-go hoksāang dōu béi 'A' ge**
He gives every student an 'A'

1	**Kéuih mātyéh beimaht jī ge**	She knows every secret
2	**Gāau-gāau gūngsī móuh sīusīk**	There's no news from any of the companies
3	**Ngóh go-go jih m̀h sīk duhk**	I don't know how to read every word
4	**Ngóh fuhmóuh go-go jáiléui gam sek**	My parents love all their children
5	**Kéuih fún-fún sān chē m̀h múhnyi**	He is dissatisfied with all the new car models
6	**Lóuhbáan tìuh-tìuh sou gai dāk hóu chīngchó**	The boss calculates every sum accurately
7	**Kéuih go-go yuht jéuusìh gāau-jōu**	He pays the rent on time every month
8	**Kéuih chi-chi jāaug-jyuh màaih-dāan**	Every time he fights to foot the bill
9	**Só yáuh ge gwai-bān chóh saai háidouh**	All the VIPs are sitting here
10	**Só yáuh ge jyuyilihk jaahpjūng hái léih douh**	All the attention is centred on you

Exercise 15.2

Quantify the noun with classifier in the Cantonese sentence and make the necessary changes to the sentence to express the meaning in the English translation given.

Example: **Ngóh tong-jó tìuh fu la** — I've ironed the trousers
Ngóh tìuh-tìuh fu dōu tong-jó la — I've ironed all the trousers
or
Tìuh-tìuh fu ngóh dōu tong-jó la

1	**Go sīgēi yáuh tūnghàhng-jing**	Every driver has the permit
2	**Ngóh jūngyi jek māau**	I like every cat
3	**Gāan jáulàuh ngóhdeih heui-gwo**	We've been to every restaurant

4	**Kéuih sīk daap tìuh tàihmuhk**	She knows how to answer every question
5	**Ngóh jek sáují tung dou séi**	All my fingers hurt like mad
6	**Fūng seun tái saai la**	I've finished reading all the letters
7	**Fūk wá hóu yáuh-yisī**	Every picture is full of meaning
8	**Sáu gō hóu ngāam-tēng**	All the songs are good to listen to
9	**Pō syuh yáuh jeukjái jyuh ge**	Every tree has birds living in it
10	**Dihp choi hóu hēung**	Every dish of vegetables smells good

Exercise 15.3

Use **dō/síu**, **dō/síu dī** or **dō-jó/síu-jó** as appropriate to mean 'more' or 'less'.

Example: **Ngóh séung chēut gāai** I want to go out (less)
Ngóh séung síu dī chēut gāai or **Ngóh séung chēut síu dī gāai**

1	**Léih yiu tùhng jáiléui kīnggái**	You need to talk to your children (more)
2	**Ngóhdeih chéng-jó yāt wàih tói ge yàhn**	We've invited one (more) table of people
3	**Gāmyaht làih-jó go gúdūng**	One shareholder (too few) came today
4	**Léih hó-m̀h-hóyíh góng dī, jouh dī a?**	Could you talk a bit (less) and do a bit (more)?
5	**Léih jeui hóu dá màh-jéuk**	You had better play (less) mahjong
6	**Chéng léih gwāansām háh ūkkéi yàhn**	Please take (more) care of your family
7	**Ngóh séung làuh hái ūkkéi yāusīk háh**	I'd like to stay at home to rest (more)
8	**Jeuigahn sihk-jó Sāigung dī hōisīn**	Recently we've been eating (less) Sai Kung seafood
9	**Hēunggóng gām lín syúga hóu dō yàuh-haak**	This summer there have been many (more) tourists in Hong Kong
10	**Gāan ūk yāt go fóng, yāt go gūngyàhn**	The house has one (more) room and one (less) maid

Exercise 15.4

Add **saai** or **màaih** as appropriate.

Example: **Ngóhdeih daai <u>màaih</u> dī sailouh heui douh-ga**
We're taking the children (along) on holiday

Ngóhdeih daai saai dī sailouh heui douh-ga
We're taking (all) the children on holiday

1 **Yám ______ dī tōng kéuih lā**
Drink up (all) the soup
2 **Jáu jīchìhn yiu tái ______ fahn bougou**
I have to read (the whole of) the report before leaving
3 **Léih yiu béi ______ gām go yuht ge jōu**
You have to pay this remaining month's rent
4 **Faai dī sihk ______ dī hā kéuih lā**
Eat up the (remaining) shrimp
5 **Ngóh chéng ______ ngóh go jái dī pàhngyáuh**
I'm inviting my son's friends (too)
6 **Léih yiu béi ______ gām go yuht ge jōu**
You have to pay (the whole of) this month's rent
7 **Yám ______ dī tōng kéuih lā**
Drink up (the rest of) the soup
8 **Faai dī sihk ______ dī hā kéuih lā**
Eat up the (whole plate of) shrimp
9 **Ngóh chéng ______ ngóh go jái dī pàhngyáuh**
I'm inviting (all) my son's friends
10 **Jáu jīchìhn yiu tái ______ fahn bougou**
I have to read (the rest of) the report before leaving

UNIT SIXTEEN
Negative sentences

In this unit we focus on aspects of negative sentences, in particular, words which have special meanings or functions in negative sentences. These are sentences including the main negative words coming before the verb (*Basic Cantonese*, Unit 14):

m̀h	not	**Ngóh m̀h jaausìhng**	I don't approve
móuh	haven't	**Kéuih móuh wáu-gwo ngóh**	He hasn't contacted me
meih	not yet	**Meih yáuh sīusīk**	There is no news yet
mhóu	don't	**Mhóu gam sēuugsām lā**	Don't be so sad

A number of words when used in negative sentences have meanings different from their usual meanings.

Negative word + joi no longer

The adverb **joi** 'again' in conjunction with a negative word gives the meaning 'no longer':

Lī bouh gēi m̀h joi chēut ge la
This machine is no longer produced

Ngóhdeih móuh joi dehug lī fahn boují
We don't order this newsaper any more

Mgōi léih mhóu joi tàih-héi kéuih
Please don't mention him any more

Ngóh m̀h hóyíh joi yáu lohk-heui
I can't stand it any longer

Léih msái joi mùhn-jyuh ngóh la
You don't need to hide it from me any more

jyuh in negative sentences

The aspect marker **jyuh** normally attaches to a verb to indicate continuous aspect (ongoing actions: see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 19). In negative sentences, it comes at the end of the clause and means 'not ... yet' or 'for the time being':

Ngóh m̀h fāan ūkkéi jyuh	I'm not going home yet
Léih mhóu góng béi yàhn tēng jyuh	Don't tell anyone yet
Máih jáu jyuh!	Don't go yet!
Ga chē meih jā dāk jyuh	The car can't be driven yet
Ngóhdeih jaahmsìh msái būn jyuh	We don't need to move for the time being

Although characteristic of negative sentences, this usage also appears in positive sentences together with the particle **sīn**:

Léihdeih sihk jyuh sīn; msái dáng ngóh
You keep eating for the moment; no need to wait for me

Léih tóuh-ngoh maih máaih dī yéh díng jyuh sīn lō (overheard on the underground)
If you're hungry, buy something to keep you going

Indefinite question words

The 'wh-words' as used in wh-questions (**bīngo** 'who', **mātyéh** 'what', etc.) appear in negative sentences with special 'indefinite' meanings as follows:

	In questions	*In negative sentences*
bīngo	who?	anyone
mātyéh	what?	anything
bīndouh	where?	anywhere
dím (yéung)	how?	in any way
géi (dō)	how many?	many, much

In the negative sentences concerned, there is typically a negative word such as **m̀h** or **mónh** preceding the question word:

Móuh bīngo wúih gam chéun ge	Hardly anyone would be so stupid
Léih gāmyaht móuh mātyéh jouh	You don't have anything much to do today
Ngóhdeih móuh bīndouh heui	We don't have anywhere much to go
Ngóh móuh dím (yéung) lám-gwo	I hardly gave it any thought
Móuh géi dō sìhgaan jihng	There's not much time left

Note that the meaning is 'hardly at all' rather than 'not at all' which is expressed using **dōu** (see Unit 15):

Ngóhdeih m̀h wúih heui bīndouh	We won't go anywhere much
Ngóhdeih bīndouh dōu m̀h wúih heui	We won't go anywhere at all

The difference is brought out in cases where it is spelt out that something, however little, is done:

Léih gāmyaht móuh mātyéh jouh, jihughaih yiu dá fūng seuu jēk
You don't have anything much to do today, just type up a letter

Ngóh m̀h wúih dím fáandeui, bātgwo ngóh wúih góng dī mahutàih béi yàhn tēng
I won't exactly object, but I'll tell people about the problems

Gām-lín jauhsyun gā yàhngūng, dōu m̀h wúih gā géi dō
This year even if there's a pay rise, it won't be much

The contexts in which these indefinite meanings apply are not limited to negation itself, but also include other 'negative polarity' contexts such as:

i Conditional sentences (see Unit 20):

Yùhgwó yáuh mātyéh mtóh, jīkhāak wah ugóh jī
If anything is wrong, let me know immediately

Yùhgwó bīngo msyūfuhk, jeuhn faai chēut sēng
If anyone is unwell, they should say so as soon as possible

ii 'Yes/no' questions:

Yáuh-móuh bīngo séung tái-háh li go móhngyihp a?
Is there anyone who wants to have a look at this web page?

Léih yáuh-móuh mātyéh sāaugyaht yuhumohug a?
Do you have any birthday wish?

Conjunction in negative sentences: neither . . . nor

There are no words corresponding to 'neither . . . nor'. Instead, a conjunction of two negative clauses is used, using **yauh . . . yauh**:

Kéuih yauh m̀h fūk ngóh ge seun yauh m̀h fūk ngóh ge dihnwá
He neither replies to my letters nor returns my calls

Kéuihdeih yauh móuh chín yauh móuh mín
They have neither money nor face

This corresponds to **yauh . . . yauh** in positive sentences meaning 'both . . . and':

Kéuih yauh jūngyi duhk-syū yauh jūngyi wahnduhng
She enjoys both studying and sports

The auxiliaries yiu and msái

Recall that the auxiliary **yiu** 'need', 'have to' has **msái** as its negative counterpart (*Basic Cantonese*, Unit 20).

Ngóh gāmyaht yiu fāan-hohk	I have to go to school today
Ngóh gāmyaht msái fāan-hohk	I don't have to go to school today

The form **sái** without the negative prefix occurs only in rhetorical questions (see Unit 17):

Sái léih gaau ngóh àh?	**Juhng sái góng mē?**
As if I need you to teach me that!	Needless to say!

Here the negation is implied by the rhetorical question.

Exercise 16.1

Express the following using **joi** together with the appropriate negative word.

Example: I'm no longer learning Thai (**hohk Taai-mán**)
→ **Ngóh móuh joi hohk Taai-mán**

1 He no longer sees that doctor **(gó go yīsāng)**
2 Don't go on deceiving yourself **(ngāak jihgéi)**

3 This matter cannot drag on any longer (**tō lohk-heui**)
4 Don't be so naughty (**yáih**) any more
5 His wound (**sēunghάu**) does not hurt (**tung**) any more
6 She hasn't been throwing tantrums (**faat-pèihhei**) any more today
7 You don't need to explain (**gáai-sīk**) any more
8 We don't need to take care of them any more (**jiugu kéuihdeih**)

Exercise 16.2

Negate the sentences using the appropriate negative word together with **jyuh** to give the meaning specified.

Example: **Màaih dāan lā** (Don't) pay the bill (yet)
→ **Mhóu màaih dāan jyuh (lā)** (Don't) pay the bill (yet)

1	**Sāu-sin lā**	(Don't) hang up (yet)
2	**Ngóh dásyun būn ūk**	I'm (not) planning to move house (yet)
3	**Sāu màaih fūng seun lā**	(Don't) put the letter away (yet)
4	**Ngóhdeih heui dāk ge la**	We can(not) go (yet)
5	**Faht go hohksāang lā**	(Don't) punish the student (yet)
6	**Dá hōi dī láihmaht lā**	(Don't) open the presents (yet)
7	**Sénhng chòhng fan-gaau lā**	(Don't) go to bed (yet)
8	**Kéuih wán dóu gūng**	She has (not) found a job (yet)
9	**Léih yīnggōi fonghei**	You should (not) give up (yet)
10	**Ngóh yiu hohk Póutūngwá**	I (don't) need to learn Putonghua (yet)

Exercise 16.3

Add a wh-word in its indefinite sense.

Example:
Léih wúih-m̀h-wúih hauhfui a? Do you regret it (in any way)?
→ **Léih wúih-m̀h-wúih (dím) hauhfui a?**

1 **Ngóh móuh gāp sih**
I don't have (much) urgent business
2 **Léih gāmyaht yáuh-móuh heui máaih-sung a?**
Did you go (anywhere) shopping today?
3 **Hói-gwāan m̀h wúih chàh léih ge**
They won't inspect you (much) at the customs
4 **Yùhgwó léih móuh mahntàih, ngóhdeih yìhgā hóyíh chīm yeuk**
If you don't have (any) questions, we can sign the contract now

5 **Lóuhbáan m̀h wúih laauh léih ge**
The boss won't scold you (in any way, much)

6 **Yùhgwó yáuh tàuhsou, hóyíh dá Ii go lāmbá**
If you have (any) complaints, you can dial this number

7 **Kéuih yáuh-móuh chānchīk hóyíh jiugu kéuih ga?**
Does he have (any) relatives who can take care of him?

8 **Yùhgwó léih heui léuih-hàhng, geidāk daai màaih ngóh heui**
If you go on holiday (anywhere), remember to take me along with you

9 **Ngóhdeih móuh chín sái**
We don't have (much) money to spend

10 **Móuh yàhn làih taam ngóh**
Nobody (much) comes to visit me

UNIT SEVENTEEN

Questions and answers

Disjunctive questions

Questions of the form 'A not A' are the usual way to ask 'yes/no' questions (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 23):

Tóuh-m̀h-tóuh-ngoh a?	Are you hungry?
Léih wán-m̀h-wán dóu kéuih a?	Did you find him?

Questions of the form 'A or B?' are formed with **dihng** or **dihnghaih**:

Léih béi yihn-gām dihng chīm-kāat a?
Will you pay with cash or credit card (*lit.* sign a card)?

Léih séung gāmyaht heui dihnghaih tīngyaht sīn heui a?
Do you want to go today or not until tomorrow?

Yáuh yàhn mahn gaugíng yāt go Jūnggwok dihng léuhng go Jūnggwok wóh
People are asking if there is really one China or two Chinas

This should not be confused with other conjunctions meaning 'or' which are used in statements but not in questions:

i **yāthaih . . . yāthaih** 'either . . . or'

Ngóhdeih yāthaih làuh hái Hēunggóng yāthaih būn fāan Yīnggwok
Either we stay in Hong Kong or we move back to England

Léih yāthaih jihgéi jouh saai kéuih, yāthaih dáng ngóh jouh saai kéuih
Either you do it all yourself or let me do it all myself

ii **waahkjé . . . waahkjé** 'maybe . . . or maybe'

Ngóh waahkjé tīngyaht wán léih, waahkjé hauhyaht
Maybe I'll contact you tomorrow, or maybe the day after

Ngóh waahkjé jyú-faahn waahkjé chēut heui sihk
Maybe I'll cook or maybe I'll go out to eat

As the examples suggest, **yāthaih** represents a definitive choice (as in an ultimatum) while **waahkjé** is more tentative and suggests indecision.

Particle questions: mē and àh

The particles **mē** and **àh** turn a statement into a question of a particularly loaded kind. **mē** indicates surprise that something should be the case ('How can this be true?'):

Gám dōu lám m̀h dóu ge mē?
(*lit.* such even think not succeed really)
Couldn't you even think of that?

Lī dī yéh dōu yiu ngóh léih màaih ge mē?
(*lit.* these things even need me deal with as well really)
You mean I even have to deal with this stuff?

àh suggests surprise and often an element of disapproval ('If this is true I don't think much of it'):

Gam chín ge douhléih dōu m̀h mìhng àh?
Can't you even understand such a simple principle?

Kéuih dou yìhgā dōu m̀h háng yùhnleuhng léih àh?
Is he still unwilling to forgive you even now?

The element of disbelief in such questions can be reinforced by beginning the question with **mtūng** 'can it be':

Mtūng yiu ngóh jouh saai mē?
Could it be that I have to do it all myself?

Mtūng yiu ngóh jouh saai àh?
Do you mean I have to do it all myself?

Here **mtūng** suggests that the proposition is ridiculous. It can also mean 'could it be . . .' in a context of guesswork:

Kéuihdeih jeuigahn sèhngyaht yātchàih; mtūng kéuihdeih paak-gáu-tō?
They're always together these days; could it be that they're dating?

Note that **àh** appears in 'disguised' forms such as **gàh** and **làh** as a result of contraction (see Unit 23).

Negative questions

A difficulty here is how to answer questions in the negative using **mē** and **àh**. The word **haih** literally means 'such is the case' and therefore has the effect of agreeing with the premise of the question:

A:	**Léih gāmyaht msái fāan-gūng mē?**	Don't you have to go to work today?
B:	**Haih a, msái**	No, I don't

To disagree with the premise **mhaih** ('such is not the case') is used, corresponding to English 'yes' (much to the confusion of English speakers):

B:	**Mhaih a, yiu**	Yes, I do

The particle **ak** with its abrupt ending is often used to emphasise the disagreement:

A:	**Léih móuh yéh jouh ge mē?**	Don't you have any work to do?
B:	**Mhaih ak!**	Yes I do! (Why would you think that?)

The **haih** or **mhaih** is often followed by an affirmation which includes the predicate of the original question, or elaborates on it:

A:	**Léih meih fa hóu jōng àh?**	Haven't you finished putting on your make-up?
B:	**Haih a, juhng yáuh pàaih**	No, I'll be a while yet
A:	**Ngóhdeih móuh saai jí làh?**	Haven't we got any paper?
B:	**Mhaih ak, juhng yáuh daaih bá**	Yes we do, we have plenty

Multiple questions

It is possible to have two or more question words in the same sentence:

Bīngo máaih-jó mātyéh láihmaht a? Who bought what present?

Confronted with a sick patient, a doctor might ask:

Léih géisìh hái bīndouh sihk-gwo dī mātyéh a?
What did you eat where, and when?

The answer might be:

Kàhm-máahn hái jáudim sihk-gwo gāi-faahn; gām jīu hái ūkkéi sihk jūk
Last night I had chicken rice at the hotel; this morning I had congee at home

Such multiple questions are also likely to appear as indirect questions (see Unit 21):

Ngóh m̀h jī bīngo gwaai bīngo
I don't know who's blaming whom

Ngóh m̀h geidāk ngóhdeih hái bīndouh jouh-jó dī mātyéh
I don't remember what we did where

Note the use of **dī** here to indicate that **mātyéh** refers to more than one thing (see Unit 8).

Rhetorical questions

A major function of questions is to make a point, without necessarily expecting an answer. Each of the question words can be so used:

Bīngo wah ngóh m̀h sihk dāk yīn ga?
Who says I can't smoke?

Gam hāk, ngóh dím tái dóu a?
How can I see when it's so dark?

bīndouh 'where' (or simply **bīn**) is especially prone to such rhetorical uses – even when no actual place is involved:

Ngóh bīudouh máaih dāk héi a?
How can I afford (to buy) it?

Bīudouh yáuh yàhn wah léih m̀h leng a?
When (*lit.* where) has anyone said you're not beautiful?

Ngóh bīudouh (or **géisìh**) **yáuh góng-gwo gā yàhu-gūng a?**
When did I say anything about raising salaries?

mātyéh 'what', or its short form **māt**, can be inserted into a word or phrase to make a rhetorical question:

Faat mātyéh pèihhei a?	What are you getting angry about?
Juhng góng mātyéh siu a?	What are you still joking about?

The form **sái māt** 'what's the use?' is a rare case of **sái** 'need' appearing without its negative prefix:

Sái māt tùhng kéuih gam haakhei a?
What's the use of being so polite with him?

Colloquially, **gwái** (see Unit 24) can appear in place of a wh-word in rhetorical questions:

Gwái giu léih gám m̀h síusām àh!
(*lit.* devil asked you to be so careless)
Serves you right for being so careless

Gwái m̀h mohng kéuih móuh dāk sīugjīk
(*lit.* devil not hope s/he not have promote)
Everyone hopes that she doesn't get promoted

Ngóh chóh gam hauh, tái gwái dóu mē?
(*lit.* I sit so back, see devil succeed really)
How can I see when I'm sitting so far back?

Exercise 17.1

Offer someone a choice of the form 'A or B?'

A: Using **dihng**

Example: congee (**jūk**) or rice (**faahn**)

Léih séung sihk jūk dihng faahn a?
Do you want to eat congee or rice?

1 working (**jouh**) a day shift (**yaht-gāaug**) or night shift (**yeh-gāang**)
2 taking leave (**fong-ga**) this year (**gām-lín**) or next (**chēut-lín**)
3 classical music (**gúdín yāmngohk**) or pop music (**làuhhàhng yāmngohk**)
4 seeing a Chinese (**Jūng-yī**) or Western doctor (**Sāi-yī**)
5 staying in a private hospital (**sīgā yīyún**) or a public hospital (**gūnglahp yīyún**)

B: using **yāthaih ... yāthaih**

Example: wearing a raincoat (**jeuk yúhlāu**) or carrying an umbrella (**daai bá jē**)
→ **Léih yāthaih jeuk yúhlāu yāthaih daai bá jē**

6 paying the rent immediately (**jīkhāak gāau jōu**) or moving out immediately (**jīkhāak būn jáu**)
7 studying arts (**màhn-fō**) or studying science (**léih-fō**)
8 going with me (**tùhng ngóh yātchàih heui**) or going by yourself (**jihgéi heui**)
9 hiring a maid (**chéng gūngyàhn**) to look after the child (**chau-jái**) or doing it by yourself (**jihgéi chau**)
10 taking early retirement (**tàih jóu teuiyāu**) or going part-time (**jyun** part-time)

Exercise 17.2

Answer the following negative questions. Give both an affirmative answer (agreeing with the premise of the question) and a negative one (disagreeing).

Example: **Léih meih wuhn sāam àh?** Haven't you changed (clothes) yet?
Haih a, juhng meih wuhn No, I haven't
Mhaih ak, wuhn-jó ge la Yes, I have

1 **Māt kéuih móuh wah léih jī mē?** What, didn't he tell you?
2 **Léih yaht-yaht dōu msái chau-jái gàh?** Don't you ever have to look after your child?
3 **Māt léih móuh heui hōi-wúi mē?** What, didn't you go to the meeting?
4 **Chisó móuh saai chijí làh?** Isn't there any paper left in the lavatory?

5 **Léih móuh ngóh sáu-tàih dihnwá houhmáh mē?**	Don't you have my mobile number?
6 **Léih msái dá-dihnwá fāan ūkkéi mē?**	Don't you have to call home?
7 **Kéuihdeih git-jó-fān gam loih, juhng meih yáuh bìhbī àh?**	They have been married for so long and still don't have a baby?
8 **Kéuih jek geuk tung-jó gam loih juhng m̀h háng heui tái yīsāng àh?**	His foot has been hurting for so long and he still won't go to see a doctor?

Exercise 17.3

Pose a rhetorical question to suggest the same idea as the negative sentence given. Use a wh-word such as **bīn(douh)**, **dím**, **géisìh**, **māt** or the expletive **gwái**.

Example: **Yīnggwok móuh doihsyú**
There are no kangaroos in England
→ **Yīnggwok bīn(douh) yáuh doihsyú a?** or
Yīnggwok dím wúih yáuh doihsyú a?
Of course there aren't kangaroos in England

1 **Ngóh tēng m̀h dóu**	I cannot hear
2 **Móuh yàhn bōng kéuih**	Nobody helps him
3 **Ngóh móuh ngāak-gwo léih**	I've never cheated you
4 **Ngóhdeih gāmyaht jouh m̀h saai**	We can't finish today
5 **Msái kéuih gaau ngóh**	I don't need him to teach me
6 **Léih msái gam hóu sām la**	You don't need to be so kind

UNIT EIGHTEEN
Relative clauses

Relative clauses are essentially a sentence modifying a noun, as in 'the things that you like to eat', where 'that you like to eat' modifies 'the things'. In Cantonese, the relative clause comes before the noun it modifies. There are two ways to form such a relative clause:

a With **ge** linking the clause to the noun:

Duhk Dākmán ge hohksāang **juhng meih dou**
(*lit.* study German that students have not arrived yet)
The students who study German have not yet arrived

Léih jyú ge sung **béi ngóhdeih sihk saai la**
(*lit.* you cook that dishes by us eat all)
The dishes you cook have been eaten up by us

These clauses refer to students and dishes in general, rather than to particular individual students or dishes. The use of **ge** here is much like using an adjective to modify the noun (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 9), and it is useful to compare an attributive adjective with a simple relative clause:

chūngmìhng ge hohksāang
intelligent students, students who are intelligent

chāamgā ge hohksāang
the students (who are) taking part

The constructions with **ge** correspond closely to the Mandarin ones with **de**, and are especially appropriate in more formal contexts where the grammar of written Chinese is followed.

b Using **gó** 'that' and the appropriate classifier:

***Kàhmyaht dou gó fūng seun* hái bīndouh a?** (classifier: **fūng** for letters)
Where's the letter that arrived yesterday?

***Ngóhdeih seuhng chi tái gó tou hei* ló-gwo jéung ga** (classifier: **tou** for films)
The film we saw last time had received an award

Because it includes both **gó** meaning 'that' and a classifier, a relative clause of this kind refers to a specific item: 'the . . . which . . .', not 'any . . . which . . .'. For more than one item, the plural classifier is used (**gó dī**: see Unit 8):

Yám-chàh gó dī yàhn	The people who are having dim sum
Kàhmyaht yíng gó dī séung	The pictures we took yesterday

This type of relative clause with classifier is relatively colloquial.

Note how the noun itself can be dropped when its identity is clear from the context:

Ngóh haih *kàhmyaht dá-dihnwá làih gó go*
I'm the one who called yesterday

***Ngóh séung wán gó dī* haih gám yéung ge**
The ones I'm looking for are like that

This is a natural extension of the use of a classifier to stand for a noun, as in **nī dī** 'these (ones)' (see Unit 8).

Relative clauses and topicalization

Sometimes a relative clause will come after the verb, especially when the relative clause modifies the object of the verb:

Ngóh m̀h sīk tēng *sīnsāang góng gó dī Yīngmán*
I don't understand the English the teacher speaks

Kéuih jūngyi tái *Gāmyùhng sé gó dī móuhhahp síusyut*
She likes to read the martial arts novels written by Jin Rong

Such sentences tend to become clumsy especially when a further phrase is added after the object:

Léih báai-jó ***ngóh gāmjīu máaih gó dī boují*** **hái bīndouh a?**
(*lit.* you put I this morning bought newspapers at where)
Where did you put the newspapers I bought this morning?

Ngóh ló-jó ***gó yaht hái Gwóngchèuhng máaih gó gihn sāam*** **heui gōn-sái**
(*lit.* I took that day at shopping mall buy that blouse go dry clean)
I took the blouse I bought the other day in the mall for dry cleaning

The solution to this problem is to make the object the topic of the sentence, complete with the relative clause modifying it:

Ngóh gāmjīu máaih gó dī boují, **léih báai-jó hái bīndouh a?**
The newspapers I bought this morning, where did you put (them)?

Gó yaht hái Gwóngchèuhng máaih gó gihn sāam, **ngóh ló-jó heui gōn-sái**
(*lit.* that day at shopping centre buy that blouse I took to dry clean)
I took the blouse I bought the other day at the shopping centre for dry cleaning

As the comma suggests, one can (but need not) pause to catch breath between the topic and the rest of the sentence (on topicalization in general, see Unit 9 and *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 22).

Subject and object relatives

Within the relative clause, the noun being modified may have the role of subject or object:

Jīchìh ngóhdeih ge pàhngyáuh
(*lit.* support us that friends)
friends that support us (**pàhngyáuh** = subject of **jīchìh**)

ngóhdeih jīchìh ge pàhngyáuh
(*lit.* we support that friends)
friends that we support (**pàhngyáuh** = object of **jīchìh**)

In addition, one might wish to form relative clauses like 'the friends to whom we lend money' in which 'the friends' are the indirect object of the verb 'lend'. This can be done but a 'resumptive' pronoun is needed, referring to the following noun:

A-Yīng je chín béi kéuihdeih gó dī tùhngsih **m̀h seun dāk gwo ga**
(*lit.* Ying lend money to them those colleagues not trustworthy)
The colleagues Ying lent money to are not trustworthy

Ngóh sung láihmaht béi kéuih gó go gaausauh **haih go mahtléih-hohk-gā**
(*lit.* I gave gift to him that professor is a physicist)
The professor I gave a present to is a physicist

Similarly when the noun is the object of a coverb such as **tùhng** (Unit 7):

Ngóh tùhng kéuih yātchàih bātyihp gó go tùhng-hohk **jouh-jó gōu-gwūn**
(*lit.* I with her graduated that classmate has become a senior official)
The classmate I graduated with has become a senior official

The pronoun is also needed when the noun is an object followed by a complement clause:

Ngóh gin-gwo *kéuih* tiu-móuh gó go tùhngsih gām jīu dá-dihnwá làih
(*lit.* I saw him dance that colleague this morning called)
The colleague who I saw dancing called this morning

Gūngsī gou *kéuih* kwāi hūng gūngfún gó go jīkyùhn chìh-jó-jīk
(*lit.* the company sued him embezzlement that employee has resigned)
The employee whom the company sued for embezzlement has resigned

Relative clauses with indefinite words

As we saw in the case of negative sentences (Unit 16), the question words can have an 'indefinite' meaning. A distinct type of relative clause uses the same question words to mean 'whoever', 'whatever' and so on:

Bīngo m̀h ngāam jauh yiu douh-hip
Whoever is in the wrong should apologize

Mātyéh gáamga jauh máaih mātyéh
Whatever is on sale, we'll buy it

Note the repetition of the question word and the use of **jauh** as in conditional sentences (Unit 19). Similarly with other question words:

Bīn gāan gūngsī chéng ngóh, ngóh jauh heui bīn gāan jouh lō
I'll go to work for whichever company employs me

Léih séung dím jauh dím lā
Do as you like

Bīndouh yáuh hói-tāan, ngóhdeih jauh heui gódouh wáan
We'll go on holiday wherever there's a beach

Exercise 18.1

Based on the sentence provided, construct a classifier relative clause to modify the italicized head noun.

Example: **Gó dī *yàhn* páau-gán bouh** Those people are jogging
→ **Páau-gán bouh gó dī yàhn** The people who are jogging

1 **Gó go *deihcháan gīnggéi* tàuhsīn dá-dihnwá làih**
That estate agent has just called
2 **Go *wuihgaisī* chìh-jó-jīk**
The accountant has resigned
3 **Gó dī *geijé* yíng-gán-séung**
Those reporters are taking pictures
4 **Jek *gáu* sātjūng-jó sāam yaht**
The dog went missing for three days
5 **Dī *hohksāang* jouh-gán sahtyihm**
The students are doing experiments
6 **Go *behngyàhn* chēut-jó yún**
The patient has got out of the hospital
7 **Dī *jyūn-gā* yātchàih yìhn-gau lī go mahntàih**
The specialists are studying this problem together
8 **Go *pàhngyáuh* taam-gwo ngóh géi chi**
The friend has visited me a few times
9 **Ga *chē* johng chān jek māau**
The car has bumped into a cat
10 **Go *yīsāng* bōng kéuih hōi-dōu**
The surgeon has performed the operation for him

Exercise 18.2

Translate these sentences into Cantonese.

1 The company that had lost (**siht-jó**) a lot of money had gone bankrupt (**jāp-jó-lāp**)
2 The man I bumped into (**johng dóu**) yesterday was my boss
3 The watch (**jek bīu**) that he wears (**daai-jyuh**) all the time is beautiful
4 The professors that we visited (**taam-gwo**) once are Americans
5 The computer that I'm using is too old (**gauh**)
6 Those few letters that I've written have disappeared (**mgin-jó**)
7 Those Cantonese books that we've bought are expensive (**gwai**)
8 The films that you like to see are too slow (**maahn**)
9 The wine that they've drunk smells nice (**hóu hēung**)
10 The medicine that she takes is effective (**hóu yáuh-haauh**)

Exercise 18.3

Construct a colloquial relative clause using **gó** to replace those given using **ge**:

Example: **Ngóh jā ge chē móuh láahnghei**
The car I drive has no air conditioning
→ **Ngóh jā gó ga chē móuh láahnghei**

1 **Ngóh tái-hōi ge yīsāng haih Gimkìuh bātyihp ge**
The doctor I've been consulting graduated from Cambridge
2 **Kéuih dī jáiléui duhk ge hohkhaauh sāu hóu gwai hohkfai**
The school his children go to charges expensive fees
3 **Kéuih jyú ge sung móuh lohk yìhm**
The dishes she cooked did not have salt
4 **Ngóh chéng ge yàhn-haak chyùhnbouh lèih chàih saai**
The guests I invited have all arrived
5 **Chìh dou ge hohksāang hóyíh chóh hái hauhbihn**
The students who arrived late can sit in the back
6 **Syūnbou hóu yihpjīk ge gūngsī jeuigahn kòhng sīng**
The companies which announced good results have risen in value lately
7 **Ngāam-ngāam máaih ge gongkàhm yàuh Dākgwok wahn dou**
The piano we have just bought arrived from Germany
8 **Go jái waahk ge wá hóyíh sung béi yàhn**
The pictures that my son drew can be given (as gifts) to people
9 **Lóuhbáan chéng ge beisyū meih chìh dou gwo**
The secretary the boss employed has never been late
10 **Ngóh jūngyi ge síusyut dōsou móuh bouhlihk ge**
The novels I like usually don't have violence

†Exercise 18.4

Use a relative clause to combine the sentences provided.

Example: **Léih bōng ngóh máaih gihn sāam; gihn sāam mgin-jó**
You bought a dress for me; the dress has disappeared
→ **Léih bōng ngóh máaih gó gihn sāam mgin-jó**
The dress you bought for me has disappeared

1 **Kéuih gei go bāau-gwó béi ngóh; go bāau-gwó chúhng dou līng mh héi**
He sent me a parcel; the parcel is so heavy that I can't lift it
2 **Léih tēuijin go hohksāang; go hohksāang háau-síh chēut-māau**
You recommended the student; the student cheated in the exam
3 **Léih gaaisiuh go tùhngsih làih gūngsī jouh-yé; go tùhngsih haih ngóh gauh tùhnghohk**
You introduced a colleague to work in our company; the colleague is an old classmate of mine
4 **Chàhmyaht tái-jó tou hei; tou hei ge jyúgok haih ngóh ge muhng jūng chìhngyàhn**
I saw a film yesterday; the star of that film is my dream lover
5 **Go-go jaan go sailouh dākyi; go sailouh haih wahnhyut-yìh**
Everyone praises the child as cute; the child is a mixed-race child
6 **Ngóhdeih syún-jó go leuhtsī jouh yìhyùhn; go leuhtsī mh jéun heui Bākgīng**
We elected a lawyer to be a legislator; the lawyer is not allowed to go to Beijing
7 **Ngóh dehng-jó bún sān syū; bún sān syū yuhng làih jouh chāamháau**
I ordered a new book; the new book is used for reference
8 **Kéuih wán dóu dī yeuhk; dī yeuhk yiu hūng-tóuh sihk ge**
He found the medicine; the medicine needs to be taken on an empty stomach
9 **Ngóh sung jek gaaijí béi go léuihjái; go léuihjái haih ngóh meih-fān-chāi**
I gave the girl a ring; the girl is my fiancée
10 **Ngóh mùihmúi tùhng go yīsāng paak-tō; go yīsāng làih sihk-faahn**
My sister is dating a doctor; the doctor is coming to dinner

UNIT NINETEEN
Subordinate clauses

Subordinate clauses as a whole are used less than in English and European languages, because other means such as serial verb constructions are used instead, especially in colloquial speech (see below on 'before'/'after', and Unit 11). It is often possible to combine two clauses without the use of conjunctions or subordinate clauses.

Double conjunctions

A characteristic feature of Chinese syntax is the use of two conjunctions in concert to express the relationship between a main clause and a subordinate one. Such patterns often appear in Chinese speakers' English (as in 'although I haven't met him, *but still I like him'). The main pairs of this kind are:

causal	**yānwaih . . . sóyíh**	because . . . therefore
temporal	**dōng . . . gójahnsìh**	when . . . then
conditional	**yùhgwó . . . jauh**	if . . . then
concessive	**sēuiyìhn . . . daahnhaih**	although . . . but
	mòuhleuhn . . . dōu	however . . . still

The first conjunction may come either:

a Before the subject of the subordinate clause, much as in English:

Yānwaih kéuih behng-jó sóyíh yiu wán yàhn doih kéuih séuhng-tòhng
Because he got ill, (so) he has to look for somebody to do substitute teaching

Sēuiyìhu Luhk Síujé móuh gīugyihm, daahuhaih bíuyihn chēutsīk
Although Ms Luk had no experience, her performance was outstanding

b After the subject of the clause (or the topic of the sentence):

Kéuih yāuwaih behng-jó sóyíh yiu wán yàhu doih kéuih séuhug-tòhng
(*lit.* he because got ill, so has to look for someone to do substitute teaching)
Because he got ill, (so) he has to look for somebody to do substitute teaching

Luhk Síujé sēuiyìhn móuh gīugyihm daahnhaih bíuyihu chēutsīk
Although Ms Luk had no experience, her performance was outstanding

An exceptional pair is **chèuihjó ... jī-ngoih**, coming at either end of the subordinate clause:

Chèuihjó cheung-gō jī-ngoih, Wòhug Fēi juhug líhug douh chìuh-làuh
Apart from singing, Faye Wong is also a trendsetter

An alternative word order is to have the subject of the main clause appearing before **chèuihjó**:

Wòhng Fēi chèuihjó cheung-gō jī-ngoih, juhng líhng douh chìuh-làuh
(*lit.* Faye Wong apart singing, also trend setting)
Apart from singing, Faye Wong is also a trendsetter

Ngóh chèuihjó léih jī-ngoih, m̀h wúih oi-séuhug kèihtā yàhn
Apart from you, I won't fall in love with any other person

Reasons

a **yānwaih ... sóyíh** is the usual pair of conjunctions for stating cause and effect, reasons and consequences:

Yānwaih kéuih gánjēung léih sóyíh gam lāu léih
Because he cares about you, that's why he's so angry with you

The point to remember is that the second conjunction **sóyíh** must be included, otherwise the sentence will sound strange (as in **Yāuwaih kéuih gánjēung léih, gam lāu léih**).

b **wàahngdihm . . . bātyùh**
The conjunction **wàahngdihm** 'since' includes a causal element ('since this happens to be the case anyway . . .'). It is typically matched by **bātyùh** in the following main clause:

Ngóh wàahngdihm yiu jā-chē fāan heui, bātyùh chē màaih léih ā
Since I'm driving back anyway, I might as well give you a lift

Léih wàahngdihm hái gódouh jouh dāk mhōisām, bātyùh làih ngóh douh jouh lā?
Since you're not happy working there anyway, why not come to work with me?

c **geiyìhn** is a more formal conjunction meaning 'since' in a causal sense:

Geiyìhn léih háau m̀h dóu yahp daaih-hohk, bātyùh wán yéh jouh lā?
Since you didn't get into university, why not look for a job?

Geiyìhn léih m̀h joi oi ngóh, bātyùh fān-sáu lā
Since you don't love me any more, let's split up

Note that neither **wàahngdihm** nor **geiyìhn** is used for 'since' in the sense of time ('ever since . . . happened'), for which see **jihchùhng** below.

Time clauses

The main conjunctions used to express time relations come at the end of the clause:

. . . gójahnsìh	when, while
. . . jīchìhn	before
. . . jīhauh	after

a **gójahnsìh** (or **gójahnsí** with changed tone), literally '(at) that time', serves as a conjunction meaning 'when', 'while':

Kéuih behng gójahnsí sau-jó géi bohng
While she was ill she lost a few pounds of weight

Ngóh git-fān gójahnsìh dāk sahpbaat seui
I was just eighteen when I got married

This can be shortened to **gójahn** (or **góján** with changed tone):

Ngóh duhk-syū góján m̀h sīk lám ngóh ge chìhntòuh
While I was studying I didn't think about my future

In more formal language there is also a pair **dōng ... gójahusìh**:

Dōng ngóh jihkmohk gójahusìh, (jauh) wúih lám héi léih
When I'm lonely, I think of you

Another formal alternative, with or without **dōng**, is **... ge sìh-hauh** (corresponding to Mandarin **de shíhou**):

(Dōng) léih hái ngóh sānbīn ge sìh-hauh, ngóh jauh hōisām ge la (from a film)
When you're at my side I'm happy

b **... jīhauh** 'after ...'

Léih fāan dou ūkkéi jīhauh dá go dihnwá béi ngóh ā
Give me a call after you get home

c **... jīchìhn** 'before'

Ngóh fāan-gūng jīchìhn yiu fa bun go jūngtàuh jōng
Before I get to work I have to spend half an hour putting on make-up

Fan-gaau jīchìhn yiu góng gújái
We have to tell stories before going to sleep

Here it is common to add an expletive **meih** to emphasize that the event has not yet happened:

Ngóh meih bātyihp jīchìhn yíhgīng yáuh yāt fahn gūng
Before graduating I already had a job

Notice that the meanings 'before' and 'after' are commonly expressed or implied by a series of verbs (Unit 11), especially in colloquial language. For example, 'after' can be expressed by using **yùhn** 'finish' and **hóu** 'done' after the first verb:

Léih tái yùhn yīsāng jauh jī haih-mhaih yáuh-jó
After seeing the doctor you'll know if you're pregnant

Dī sung jyú hóu la; sái sáu sihk-faahn lā
The food's ready; wash your hands before eating

d **jihchùhng . . . jīhauh** expresses 'since' in a temporal sense (as opposed to the causal 'since' discussed above)

Jihchùhug kéuih sātyihp jīhauh, sèhng go móuh saai sāmgēi
Ever since she lost her job she's been all listless

Ngóh jihchùhng būn-jó ūk jīhauh, hóu loih móuh fāan làih lī tàuh
Ever since I moved, I haven't come back to this area for a long time

Purpose clauses

Like sequences of actions, purpose is commonly expressed by serial verbs (Unit 11):

Ngóh yiu wán dī yéhsihk wai māau
I need to find some food to feed the cat

Alternatively, in more formal language, the coverb **waih-jó** 'for the sake of' (Unit 11) can introduce a clause:

Waih-jó gáam síu hūnghei wūyíhm, ugóhdeih jeuhu-leuhng m̀h jā-chē
In order to reduce air pollution we avoid driving as much as possible

Waih-jó yìhngjip sān saigéi, ngóhdeih yuhbeih-jó hóu dō jitmuhk
In order to welcome the new century, we have prepared a lot of programmes

Concessive clauses: although

The concessive meaning 'although' is typically expressed by the pair of conjunctions **sēuiyìhn** . . . **daahnhaih** 'although . . . but':

Kéuih sēuiyìhn haih go hóu yīsāng, daahnhaih meih bīt bōng dóu léih
Although he's a good doctor he won't necessarily be able to help you

The concessive sense can also be conveyed using **juhng** 'still' in the second clause:

Kéuihdeih gam yáuh-chín juhng jyuh fāan gāan gauh ūk
Although they're so well off they still live in the old house

The pair **mòuhleuhn … dōu** 'no matter how …' is used together with an indirect question:

Mòuhleuhn bīngo m̀h ngāam dōu yiu douh-hip
Whoever was in the wrong it's still necessary to apologize

Mòuhleuhn géi dō chín ngóh dōu háng béi
However much money I'm still willing to pay

Ngóhdeih mòuhleuhn géi làahn dōu m̀h wúih fonghei
We won't give up however difficult it is

Mòuhleuhn yáuh-móuh yàhn fáandeui, jingfú dōu m̀h wúih léih ge la
The government will not care, whether or not anyone objects

Notice once again how the English departs from the Cantonese order in which the circumstance comes first and the result second.

Exercise 19.1

Add the missing conjunction:

1 **Sēuiyìhn ngóh hóu jyūnjuhng kéuih, ______ ngóh m̀h tùhngyi kéuih ge tái-faat**
Although I respect him, I don't agree with his views
2 **Léih jauhsyun m̀h jūngyi, ______ yiu jaansìhng ge la**
Even though you don't like it, you've got to approve it
3 **Lohk-tòhng ______, léihdeih yiu gāau gūngfo béi ngóh**
Before the lesson finishes, you have to turn in the homework to me
4 **Yàuh yùhn séui ______, dī pèihfū saai dou hùhng saai**
After swimming, the skin was all burnt red by the sun
5 **Yihsahp-yāt saigéi hōichí ______, ngóh yiu sé yùhn lī bún syū**
Before the beginning of the twenty-first century, I have to finish writing this book
6 **______ géi ngàih-hím, kéuih dōu wúih bōng ngóhdeih ge**
However dangerous it is, he'll help us
7 **Jihchùhng kéuih sīng-jó-jīk ______ , hón síu gin ngóhdeih**
Ever since he got promoted, he seldom sees us
8 **______ géi sānfú ngóh dōu yiu jouh lohk-heui**
However difficult it is, I'll continue to work
9 **______ léih fan m̀h jeuhk ge sìhhauh, jeui hóu tēng-háh yāmngohk**
When you can't fall asleep, it's best to listen to music

10 ______ **kéuih msíusām, sóyíh dit chān jek jó geuk**
Because he's careless, he broke his left foot
11 **Kéuih git-fān ______, ngóh jouh buhnléung**
When she got married, I was the bridesmaid
12 ______ **léih góng mātyéh, ngóh dōu m̀h seun léih ge la**
No matter what you say, I won't trust you

Exercise 19.2

Add suitable conjunctions to connect the two clauses provided:

Example: **<u>Mòuhleuhn</u> léih géi lāu <u>dōu</u> m̀h yīnggōi lyún faat-pèihhei**
However angry you are you should not throw tantrums

1 ______ **kéuihdeih paak-tō ______, sèhngyaht chēut sēung yahp deui**
Since they've been dating they're always going around togther
2 ______ **léih gokdāk jihkmohk ______ léih hóyíh dá-dihuwá béi ngóh**
When you feel lonely you can call me
3 ______ **kéuih m̀h syūfuhk ______ yiu chéng ga**
He had to take leave because he was unwell
4 **Kéuih hái yīyún ______ sau dāk hóu gányiu**
While she was in hospital she lost a lot of weight
5 **Kéuih gāan ūk ______ yáuh wihng-chìh ______, ______ yáuh go daaih fāyúu**
Apart from having a swimming pool her house has a big garden
6 **Ngóhdeih ______ būn làih līdouh ______, jauh yíhgīng hóu jūngyi līdouh**
Before we moved here, we already liked this area very much
7 **Gāan ūk ______ hóu daaih ______ hóu lyuhn**
Although the house is big, it's messy
8 ______ **léih dím deui ngóh, ngóh ______ m̀h wúih gwaai léih**
No matter how you treat me, I won't blame you
9 ______ **kéuih teui-yāu ______, sèhngyaht chēut heui léuihhàhng**
Since he retired, he has been taking holidays all the time
10 **Kéuih ______ sei jī faatdaaht, ______ tàuhlóuh gáandāan**
Although he's well-built, his mind is overly simple

Exercise 19.3

Match the first and second clauses.

1 **Ngóhdeih sēuiyìhn hóu kùhng** a **sóyíh sīn gam hahu léih**

2	**Ngóh yāuwàih gam oi léih**	b	**jauh wúih lám héi léih**
3	**Kéuih chèuihjó háu-chòih hóu ji-ngoih**	c	**bātyùh jāuwàih hàahng-hāh**
4	**Ngóh gin dóu lī jēung séung gójáu**	d	**ngóhdeih jeuhn faai lèih-hōi**
5	**Léih mòuhleuhn béi géi dō chín**	e	**juhng hóu lengjái**
6	**Ngóhdeih wàahngdihm jóu dou**	f	**ngóh dōu m̀h maaih**
7	**Kéuih geiyìhn heung léih douhhip**	g	**daahnhaih hóu hōisām**
8	**Waih-jó daaihgā ge ōnchyùhn**	h	**léih janh yīnggōi yùhnleuhng kéuih**

UNIT TWENTY
Conditional sentences

The key words in Cantonese conditional sentences are **yùhgwó** 'if' and **jauh** 'then'. A fully explicit conditional sentence uses both these conjunctions together – just like the clauses we have seen using pairs such as **yānwaih . . . sóyîh** 'because . . . therefore' (Unit 19):

Yùhgwó tīngyaht lohk yúh, yāmngohk-wúi jauh yiu chéuisīu
If it rains tomorrow, (then) the concert will have to be cancelled

However, in colloquial speech, either **yùhgwó** or **jauh** is often left out:

Tīngyaht lohk yúh yāmngohk-wúi jauh yiu chéuisīu
(If) it rains tomorrow then the concert will have to be cancelled

Léih chìh dou ngóhdeih (jauh) m̀h dáng léih ge la
(If) you're late we won't wait for you

Yùhgwó yáuh dāk gáan, ngóh m̀h wúih yiu nī go lóuhdauh (from a film)
If it were up to me, I wouldn't want this father

Ngóh yùhgwó m̀h léih kéuih, móuh yàhn léih kéuih ge la
If I don't care about him nobody will

Conditional statements can even be made without either conjunction, especially when one or both clauses is in the negative:

Léih m̀h tùhng ngóh heui, ngóh m̀h fong-sām
(If) you don't go with me, I won't be at ease

Léih tóuh-ngoh, sihk-faahn sīn lā
(*lit.* you hungry eat rice first)
(If) you're hungry, have your dinner first

Léih m̀h tēng ngóh góng, léih séi ngaahng la (triad film)
(*lit.* you don't listen I speak, you die surely)
Disobey me and you've had it

A conditional sentence can be made more explicit by the addition of **ge wah/ge wá** at the end of the 'if' clause (corresponding to **de hnà** in Mandarin):

Yùhgwó háau m̀h dóu daaih-hohk ge wah, jauh yiu heui wáu gūng
If I don't get into university I'll go and look for a job

Léih dākhàahn ge wá, hóyíh heui hàahng-háh
If you have some free time you can go and have a walk

Syntax of conditional sentences

Some general rules of syntax apply to all the conditional constructions described in this unit:

i The 'if' clause should normally be placed before the 'then' clause:

Yùhgwó tīnhei hóu, ngóhdeih heui Sāandéng tái fūnggíng lo
If the weather's fine, we'll go to the Peak to see the view

The main exception is when the 'if' clause is added as an afterthought (see Unit 24):

Ngóhdeih heui Sāandéng tái fūnggíng lo, yùhgwó tīnhei hóu (ge wá)
We'll go to the Peak to see the view, if the weather's fine, that is

ii The first conjunction may come either before or after the subject of the 'if' clause:

Yùhgwó léih m̀h sīk jouh, dáng ngóh gaau léih ā
If you don't know how to do it, let me show you

or **Léih yùhgwó m̀h sīk jouh, dáng ngóh gaau léih ā**
If you don't know how to do it, let me show you

iii The second conjunction comes after the subject of the clause:

Yīgā béi go gēiwuih léih, léih janh yiu chùhngsān jonh yàhn
(*lit.* now give you another chance, you therefore need to be a new person)

Now given another chance, you should turn over a new leaf
(not ***jauh léih yiu chùhugsāu jouh yàhn**)

Conditional meanings

The basic structures introduced above can express a range of conditional meanings, including hypothetical and even counterfactual situations:

Yùhgwó ngóh haih léih, ngóh yātdihng m̀h wúih dáng kéuih
If I were you, I would definitely not wait for him

Yùhgwó móuh léih ge jīchìh, ngóh dím wúih yáuh gāmyaht ge sìhngjauh a?
(*lit.* if without your support, how would I have today's achievement)
If it had not been for your support, how would I have been where I am today?

Yùhgwó mhaih go yīsāng hōi-dōu, léih yāt jóu jauh wáau yùhu la (from a film)
Had the surgeon not operated, it would have been over for you

Alternative conditional markers

gáyùh and **gáchit** 'supposing' contain the word **gá** 'false' and are used for hypothetical reasoning:

Gáyùh kéuih góng ge yéh haih jān ge, léih jauh baih la
If what he said is true, you're in trouble

Gáchit chīn lìhn chùhug mahntàih m̀h làhuggau kahpsìh gáaikyut, hauhgwó jauh bāt hām chit séung la
If the millenium bug (Y2K) problem cannot be fixed in time, the effect will be unimaginable

Yeuhkgwó 'if' is a formal conjunction:

Yeuhkgwó léih m̀h jipsauh lī go ginyíh, hóyíh sèuhugsi kèihtā baahn-faat
If you don't accept this proposal, you can try other solutions

There are also particular conjunctions for special types of condition.

Necessary conditions: sīn(ji)

The adverb **sīn** expresses conditions meaning 'only . . . if', that is, necessary conditions, or in mathematical terms, 'iff'. It comes after the subject in the main clause:

Léih gau chín ngóh sīn yáuh hingcheui
I'm only interested if you have enough money

There are variant forms **sīn**, **sīnji** and **ji** which are to a large extent interchangeable:

Yùhgwó tīnhei hóu sīnji hóyíh heui sīu yéhsihk
We can only go for a barbecue if the weather is fine

Yuhng ngóhdeih ge wuhháu ji syun haih jīugmìhug ge syúnjaahk
(from television advertisement)
It only counts as the best choice if you use our accounts

Notice how the same structure can also mean 'only . . . when':

Ngóhdeih gaau-yùhn-syū sīn heui dāk
We can only go when we've finished teaching

In all these constructions the consequent clause, which often comes first in English, comes last in Cantonese. As in the case of serial verbs (Unit 11), it can be observed that the Cantonese syntax reflects the logical order of cause/condition and effect/consequence.

Sufficient conditions: jíyiu

Contrasting with necessary conditions are sufficient conditions, expressed by **jíyiu** 'as long as':

Jíyiu léih yáuh sáu yáuh geuk, msái gēng ngoh séi ge (common saying)
As long as you have hands and feet (to work with) you don't need to worry about starving

Jíyiu kéuih háng góng geui deui-mjyuh, ngóh jauh wúih yùhuleuhng kéuih
As long as he's willing to say sorry I'll forgive him

Note the use of **jauh** in the main clause, as with **yùhgwó**.

Concessive conditions: jauhsyun

Concessive conditions combine the concessive meaning 'although' and the conditional meaning 'if'. The conjunction **jauhsyun** 'even if' is matched by **dōu** 'still' in the main clause (compare other concessive clauses as illustrated in Unit 19):

Léih jauhsyun móuh sìhgaan dōu hóyíh tái-háh
You can have a look even if you don't have time

Jauhsyun léih dím mòhng dōu yīnggōi pùih-háh ūkkéi yàhn
However busy you are, you should still spend time with your family

Léih jauhsyun m̀h waih jihgéi jeuhkséung, dōu waih-háh dī jáinéui jeuhkséung ā
Even if you don't show consideration for yourself, show it to your children

Note again how the 'if' clause comes first, while in English it often comes last.

Negative conditions: chèuihfēi . . .

Chèuihfēi 'unless' can be used on its own as a conjunction:

Chèuihfēi ngóh hóu kùhng, ngóh m̀h wúih heui gódouh sihk ge
I wouldn't go there to eat unless I was really hard up

Chèuihfēi léih ga béi ngóh, ngóh m̀h héi-sān ga (from a romantic comedy)
I won't get up (off my knees) unless you marry me

To make the meaning more explicit, **chèuihfēi** in the subordinate clause is matched in the main clause by **yùhgwó mhaih** 'if not':

Chèuihfēi ngóh hóu kùhng, yùhgwó mhaih ngóh m̀h wúih heui gódouh sihk ge
(*lit.* unless I were very poor, if not I would not go there to eat)
I wouldn't go there to eat unless I was really hard up

Chèuihfēi léih góibin jyúyi, yùhgwó mhaih móuh hēimohng ge la
Unless you change your mind, there's no hope

Chèuihfēi yáuh dahkbiht sih, yùhgwó mhaih ngóhdeih sīngkèih-yāt gin
Unless something special happens, we'll see each other on Monday

yuht . . . yuht **the more . . . the more**

An implicitly conditional construction is formed with **yuht** in each clause:

Yuht chigīk kéuih yuht jūngyi
The more thrilling, the more he likes it

Yuht yeh yuht méihlaih (title of a song)
The darker the night, the more beautiful . . .

Yuht faailohk yuht dohlohk (title of a film)
The happier . . . the more decadent

Jáu yuht yám dāk dō, chìhng-séuih yuht dāi-lohk
(*lit.* wine more drink much, emotion more down)
The more wine you drink, the more depressed you feel

A related expression, **yuht làih yuht** 'more and more' can be used with any adjective:

Yuht làih yuht dō yàhn séuhng-móhng
More and more people get on the Internet

Sīhkēui ge hūnghei yuht làih yuht chā
The air quality in urban areas is getting worse and worse

Exercise 20.1

The following sentences can be understood as implicit conditionals. Add the appropriate conjunctions to make the first clause explicitly a condition for the second.

Example: **Gúsíh daaih dit, ngóh m̀h gau chín máaih ūk**
(If) the stock market crashes I won't have enough money to buy a house
→ **Yùhgwó gúsíh daaih dit, ngóh jauh m̀h gau chín máaih ūk**

1 **Léih m̀h hahpgaak, ngóh wúih hóu sātmohng**
(If) you don't pass, I'll be disappointed

2 **Léih chóh háidouh, léih wúih syūfuhk dī**
(If) you sit here, you'll be more comfortable
3 **Yáuh mātyéh sān líu, geijyuh wán ngóh gòhgō**
(If) there's some/any new information remember to get hold of my brother
4 **Kéuih haih jān pàhngyáuh, kéuih wúih mòuh tìuhgín bōng léih**
(If) he's a true friend, he'll help you unconditionally
5 **Léih juhng m̀h sāu-sin, ngóh sān-sin**
(If) you still won't hang up, I'll hang up
6 **Léih bou-gíng, ngóhdeih séi ngaahng**
(If) you call the police, we've had it
7 **Ngóh m̀h daai ngáahn-géng, yehmáahn tái m̀h dóu louh páai**
(If) I don't wear glasses I can't see the road signs in the night
8 **Léih kàhnlihk dī, yātdihng hóyíh háau dóu hóu hohkhaauh**
(If) you work a bit harder surely you can get into a good school

Exercise 20.2

Add the appropriate conjunctions to give the two meanings for the following sentences.

Example:
a **Yùhgwó léih mahn kéuih kéuih jauh wúih bōng léih**
She can help you if you ask her
b **Yùhgwó léih mahn kéuih kéuih sīn wúih bōng léih**
She can only help you if you ask her

1a **Go jái ______ faat-pèihhei, ______ m̀h yīnggōi laauh kéuih**
Even if your son throws a tantrum you shouldn't scold him
b **Go jái ______ faat-pèihhei, ______ m̀h yīnggōi laauh kéuih**
Unless your son throws a tantrum you shouldn't scold him
2a **______ yáuh yàhn háng gyūn chín, ngóhdeih ______ yáuh bēimohng**
If people are willing to donate funds we have a chance
b **______ yáuh yàhn háng gyūn chín, ngóhdeih ______ yáuh hēimohng**
Only if people are willing to donate funds do we have a chance
3a **Léih ______ m̀h góng-yéh, ______ móuh yàhn wah léih ngá ge**
Even if you keep your mouth shut, nobody will say you are dumb
b **Léih ______ m̀h góng-yéh, ______ móuh yàhn wah léih ngá ge**
Unless you keep your mouth shut, nobody will say you are dumb
4a **______ dī làuhga bóuchìh pìhngwán, sān láu ______ máaih dāk gwo laak**
As long as house prices keep stable it's safe to buy new houses
b **______ dī làuhga bóuchìh pìhngwán, sān láu ______ máaih dāk gwo gé**
If house prices keep stable it'll be safe to buy new flats

5a **Léih ______ heung ngóh douhhip, ______ ngóh yíhhauh m̀h chói léih**
Unless you apologize to me, I won't have anything more to do with you
b **Léih ______ heung ngóh douhhip, ngóh yíhhauh ______ m̀h chói léih**
Even if you apologize to me, I won't have anything more to do with you
6a **Léih ______ yāusīk gau ______ wúih hóu fāan**
As long as you take more rest you'll get better
b **Léih ______ yāusīk gau ______ wúih hóu fāan**
You'll only get better if you take more rest
7a **______ yáuh sàhnjīk, ______ móuh dāk gau ge la**
Unless there's a miracle, there's no way out
b **______ yáuh sàhnjīk, ______ móuh dāk gau ge la**
Even if there's a miracle, there's still no way out
8a **______ léih tàuh ngóh yāt piu, ngóh ______ hóyíh waih léih fuhkmouh**
I can only serve you if you vote for me
b **______ léih tàuh ngóh yāt piu, ngóh ______ hóyíh waih léih fuhkmouh**
I can serve you as long as you vote for me

Exercise 20.3

Express the following pairs using **yuht làih yuht** and **yuht . . . yuht**:

Example: a You're getting more and more forgetful
b The older you get the more forgetful you become
a **Léih yuht làih yuht móuh-geisīng**
b **Léih yuht lóuh yuht móuh-geisīng**

1a I get more and more scared (**gēng**)
b The more I think about it (**lám**), the more scared I get
2a I miss him (**gwa-jyuh kéuih**) more and more
b The more I miss him, the more I want to see him
3a Her daughter gets better and better looking (**leng**)
b Her daughter gets better looking the older (**daaih**) she gets
4a I like this song (**jūngyi lī sáu gō**) more and more
b The more I listen to (**tēng**) this song, the more I like it
5a The matter (**gihn sih**) becomes harder and harder (**làahn**) to solve (**gáaikyut**)
b The longer the matter drags on (**tō**), the harder it is to solve

UNIT TWENTY-ONE

Reported speech

Reported (or indirect) speech is used to relate what another person has said. It is expressed quite straightforwardly, without particular distinctions of tense or mood, but attention should be paid to the use of sentence particles.

Verbs of saying

In reporting speech, **wah** 'say' is followed directly by the reported statement: there is no counterpart to 'that'.

Ngóh a-gō wah Sīng Hòhng jeui dái
My brother says Singapore Airlines is the best value

Note how the subject of the reported statement can be omitted if the person referred to is already present as the subject of the verb of saying, like 'May' in the following:

A-May wah (kéuih) móuh hingcheui
May said she wasn't interested

wah is also used following other verbs of saying such as **góng** 'speak' and **tàuhsou** 'complain':

Kéuih tùhng ngóh góng wah taai guih (not ***Kéuih tùhng ngóh góng taai guih**)
He told me that he was too tired

Kéuih tùhng ngóh tàuhsou wah dī tùhngsih móuh láihmaauh
He complained to me (saying) that his colleagues were not polite

Particles: wo and wóh

These two sentence particles (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 25) play an important role in reported speech. Adding the particle **wo** flags the item as 'news'.

Boují wah gó tou hei hóu tái wo
The paper says that film is good

Adding the variant **wóh** shows that what is reported is second-hand information:

A-Sīn wah gó tou hei hóu tái wóh
Sin says that film is good

These particles can also be used without indirect speech. Use of **wo** then marks the content of the sentence as news, while **wóh** implies indirect speech:

Kéuih sāang-jó go léui wo!	She's had a daughter! (surprisingly)
Kéuih sāang-jó go léui wóh	She's had a daughter (reportedly)
Jáu dāk la wo	We can leave now (you know)
Jáu dāk la wóh	We can leave (according to what someone has said)

There are also explicit phrases to introduce hearsay information, such as **tēng-góng (wah)** which are typically used together with **wo** or **wóh**:

Tēng-góng (wah) léih sīng-jó jīk wo!
I hear you've been promoted!

Tēng-góng (wah) kéuih git-jó-fān wóh
I hear she's got married

Verbs of thinking

Verbs of thinking, belief, etc., work like verbs of speaking, with the content of a person's thoughts being reported like that of speech.

lám	think
sēungseun	believe
yíhwàih	think, believe (mistakenly/falsely or dubiously)

Ngóh lám jeui hóu wán go sīfú
I think it's best to contact a professional

Ngóh sēungseun ngóhdeih jouh dāk dóu
I believe we can manage it

Léih yíhwàih hóyíh ngāak kéuih mē?
Did you really think you could cheat him?

Note the distinction between **lám** and **sēungseun** on the one hand, and **yíhwàih** which suggests that the belief is false.

Indirect questions

Reported questions are based straightforwardly on direct questions (see *Basic Cantonese*, Units 23–24), introduced by the verb **mahn** 'ask':

Direct question	*Indirect question*
Léih heui-m̀h-heui ngoih-gwok a? Are you going abroad?	**Sailóu mahn léih heui-m̀h-heui ngoihgwok** Brother asked if you were going abroad
Léih yáuh-móuh hingcheui a? Are you interested?	**Ngóh mahn léih yáuh-móuh hingcheui jē** I'm just asking if you're interested
Ngóhdeih heui bīndouh a? Where are we going?	**A-mēi mahn ngóhdeih heui bīndouh** May asked where we were going
Léihdeih jouh-gán mātyéh a? What are you doing?	**Kéuihdeih mahn ngóhdeih jouh-gán mātyéh** They asked what we were doing

The particle **a** which usually accompanies direct questions can be omitted since the indirect question no longer has the force of a question. Again **wóh** can be added in its place to stress that the question is a quoted one:

Kéuih mahn léih tùhng bīngo heui gāai wóh
She asked who you went out with

Indirect commands

In reporting commands, the verb **giu** 'tell' is the main reporting verb. The pattern used is based on that for imperative sentences (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 26):

Imperative	*Indirect command*
Léihdeih jóu dī làih lā	**Ngóh giu kéuihdeih jóu dī làih**
Come a bit earlier	I told them (to) come earlier

The particles **ā** and **lā** which are characteristic of imperatives are omitted (since the sentence no longer has the force of an imperative), unless the report is itself a command:

Léih giu kéuihdeih jóu dī làih lā Tell them (to) come earlier

Other verbs used are **hyun** 'urge', **mihnglihng** 'order', **gínggou** 'warn', and **gin-yíh** 'suggest':

Ngóh māmìh sèhngyaht hyun ngóh git-fān
My mother is always urging me to get married

Yīsāng gin-yíh ngóh jouh dō dī wahnduhng
The doctor suggests that I take more exercise

In the case of a negative command, **mhóu** 'don't' is retained in the reported form:

Imperative	*Indirect command*
Léih mhóu gam gāp lā!	**Yīsāng giu ngóh mhóu gam gāp**
Don't be in such a hurry	The doctor told me not to be in such a hurry
Mhóu tàuhjī taai dō wo!	**Kéuih gínggou ngóh mhóu tàuhjī taai dō wóh**
Don't invest too much!	She warned me not to invest too much
Mhóu gam jóu teuiyāu lā!	**Kéuih hyun ngóh mhóu gam jóu teuiyāu**
Don't retire too early!	He urged me not to retire too early
Mhóu sihk-yīn wo!	**Lóuhbáan mihnglihng ngóh mhóu sihk-yīn**
Don't smoke, OK!	The boss orders me not to smoke

Exercise 21.1

Report the following statements:

Example: **Lóuhbáan** (boss): **tīngyaht yiu hōi-wúi**
We need to have a meeting tomorrow

→ **Lóuhbáan wah tìngyaht yiu hōi-wúi (wóh)**
The boss says we need to have a meeting tomorrow

1	**Mùihmúi** (sister): **ngóh móuh chín la**	I'm out of money
2	**Sīnsāang** (teacher): **léihdeih jáu dāk ga la**	It's all right for you to leave
3	**Gíngchaat** (police): **ngóhdeih wán-gán jing-yàhn**	We're looking for witnesses
4	**Leuhtsī** (solicitor): **léih yiu faai dī chīm-méng**	You have to sign quickly
5	**Yīsāng** (doctor): **léih m̀h yīnggōi sihk tìhm yéh**	Don't eat sweet things
6	**Pòhpó** (grandmother): **kéuihdeih m̀h sīk louh fāan ūkkéi**	They can't find their way home
7	**A-Yī** (aunt): **ngóh máaih-jó láihmaht béi léih dī jáiléui**	I bought some gifts for your children
8	**Go léui** (my daughter): **ngóh yiu heui sāangyaht-wúi**	I have to go to a birthday party
9	**Bōsí** (boss): **gūngsī gām lín m̀h gā yàhn-gūng**	The company is not raising salaries this year
10	**Ngóh taai-táai** (my wife): **gām jìu yáuh geijé wán léih**	This morning the reporters were looking for you

Exercise 21.2

Use an indirect question to report the direct question provided:

Example: **Go sīgēi: Léih jyuh hái bīndouh a?**
→ **Go sīgēi mahn ngóh jyuh hái bīndouh wóh**

1	**A-mā: Kéuihdeih géisìh bātyihp a?**	When do they graduate?
2	**Mìhng-jái: Léih jūng-m̀h-jūngyi tái hei a?**	Do you like watching films?
3	**Dī hohksāang: Léih lóuhgūng haih-m̀h-haih Yīnggwok-yàhn a?**	Is your husband English?
4	**A-Sīn: Léih séung-m̀h-séung làuh hái Hēunggóng a?**	Do you want to stay in Hong Kong?
5	**A-Dāk: Mātyéh haih léihdeih sìhnggūng ge beikyut a?**	What's the secret of your success?
6	**Yīsāng: Dímgáai léih gam gihhōng gé?**	How come you're so healthy?
7	**Go beisyū: Léih jouh māt gam hīngfáhn a?**	What are you excited about?

8	**Sī gaausauh: Léih gokdāk bīngo jeui yáuh chìhmjāt a?**	Who do you think has the most potential?
9	**Dī chānchīk: Léihdeih dī jáiléui góng Jūngmán dihng Yīngmán a?**	Do your children speak Chinese or English?
10	**Go tùhngsih: Dím sīn hóyíh máaih dóu lī go yúhn-gín a?**	How can one buy this software?

Exercise 21.3

Report the imperatives as indirect commands using appropriate verbs such as **giu** 'ask', **hyun** 'urge', **mihnglihng** 'order', and **gin-yíh** 'suggest':

Example:
Lóuhbáan (your boss): **Léih faai dī fāan làih lā**
You come back quickly
→ **Lóuhbáan giu ngóh faai dī fāan làih**
My boss asked me to come back quickly

1	**Ngóh pàhngyáuh** (friend): **Mhóu gam sēungsām lā**	Don't be so sad
2	**Sīnsāang** (teacher): **Léihdeih jīkhāak tìhng bāt lā**	Stop writing straightaway
3	**Go tùhngsih** (colleague): **Mgōi bōng-sáu ā**	Give me a hand, please
4	**Gíngchaat** (police): **Léih jīkhāak fong dāi bá chēung**	Put down the gun immediately
5	**Jyūn-gā** (experts): **Maahn-máan dáng háh sīn lā**	Wait patiently
6	**Yīsāng** (doctor): **Faai dī gaai yīn lā**	Hurry up and give up smoking
7	**Lóuhpòh** (wife): **Mhóu gam yeh fāan ūkkéi a**	Don't come home too late
8	**Go tùhnghohk** (classmate): **Yiu hóu hóu bóujuhng sāntái a**	Look after your health
9	**Go leuhtsī** (lawyer): **Jīkhāak faat fūng leuhtsī seun béi go jōuhaak**	Serve notice on the tenant immediately
10	**Ngoh lóuhgūng** (my husband): **Pùih ngóh chēut beui sihk-faahn lā**	Come out to dinner with me

UNIT TWENTY-TWO

Cantonese speech conventions

Everyday greetings

One of the first items taught to learners of Cantonese is often **léih hóu ma?** Unfortunately this is rarely used, and seems to have developed as an awkward equivalent to the English 'How do you do?' A set of conventional greetings is more widely used:

Hóu loih móuh gin wo	Long time no see
Sihk-jó faahn meih a?	How's it going? (*lit.* have you eaten yet?)

These are probably used more than the equivalents of Western greetings, such as:

léih hóu	How do you do?	**jóu sàhn**	good morning
joi gin	goodbye	**jóu táu**	good night

Especially in Hong Kong Cantonese, the English-derived **hā-lóu** and **bāai-baai** are widely used – the latter much more often than the formal **joi gin.**

Another set of greetings consists of mundane observations about the situation:

(Māt) gam āam a!	What a coincidence! (to bump into you)
(Léih) fāan làih làh	You're back!
Fāan-gūng àh?	On your way to work?
Hàahng-gūngsī àh?	Out shopping, are you?
Máaih-yéh àh?	Doing your shopping, are you?

These greetings, which appear redundant to the English speaker, are the social equivalent of observations about the weather (which seem similarly redundant to Chinese speakers).

Greetings for special occasions

Gūnghéi (saai) 'congratulations' is an all-purpose greeting for happy occasions such as births, weddings, graduations and promotions:

Gūnghéi léih, sāang-jó go léui! Jūk kéuih faai gōu jéung daaih, yuht daaih yuht leng
Congratulations on having a baby daughter! May she grow up quickly, more and more beautiful

Gūnghéi saai wo, gam faai jauh sīng-jīk
Congratulations on getting your promotion so soon

Gūnghéi faat chòih (*lit.* congratulations, make money)
Happy (Chinese) New Year

Other useful phrases for different occasions include:

Sāulìhu faailohk	Happy New Year
Singdaan faailohk	Happy Christmas
Sāangyaht faailohk	Happy birthday
Sānfān faailohk	Happy marriage (*lit.* newly-wed happiness)

Note the use of **jūk** 'wish' in the following conventional expressions:

Jūk léih léuihtòuh yuhfaai	(Wish you) have a pleasant journey
Jūk léih yāt louh seuhn fūng	(Wish you) have a smooth journey (by air or sea)
Jūk léih jóu yaht hōngfuhk	(Wish you) get well soon

Introductions

While the usual classifier to refer to people is **go**, as in **lī go yàhn** 'this person', the polite classifier **wái** is used to confer respect, as when a person is being introduced:

Lī wái haih Máh gīngléih	This is the manager, Mr Ma
Chéng gó wái léuihsih séuhng tòih	May I invite that lady onto the stage
Yáuh géi wái tùhngsih tàih-yíh gói kèih	A few colleagues have suggested changing the date

gok wái everyone

Gok wái gābān, fūnyìhng léihdeih chāamgā gām chi ge yìhutóuwúi
Honoured guests, you are all welcome to participate in this seminar

wái is also used by waiters:

Géi dō wái a?	How many are you?
Yám mātyéh chàh a, léuhug wái?	What tea would (the two of) you like?
Mgōi lībihn ā, gam dō wái	Please come this way (all of you)

Concerning names (**sing**, surname) and professions:

A: **Léih gwai sing a?** What is your name?
B: **Ngóh sing Máh ge** My name is Ma
A: **(Léih) jouh sihng hòhug a?** (formal) What is your profession?
Léih jouh bīn hòhug a? or **Léih jouh mātyéh jīkyihp a?**
B: **Ngóh jouh bóubím ge** I'm in insurance

Kinship terms

Kinship terms are widely used within the family as terms of address, in preference to personal names. Use of the appropriate kinship term is a sign of due respect, especially for senior relatives: to call an uncle or grandparent by their first name as in contemporary Western culture is unheard of.

	Elder	*Younger*
sister	**gājē**	**mùihmúi**
brother	**gòhgō**	**sailóu**

Modifiers or numbers are added to distinguish multiple brothers and sisters:

daaih gō	big brother
sai múi	little sister
yih gājē	second (eldest) sister

For grandparents, aunts and uncles the kinship terms distinguish between paternal and maternal relatives. There are also different terms for aunts and uncles based on whether they are older or younger than one's father/mother.

	Paternal	*Maternal*
aunt: older	**gū-mā**	**yìh-mā**
aunt: younger	**gū-jē**	**a-yī**
uncle: older	**a-baak**	**kau-fú**
uncle: younger	**a-sūk**	**kau-fú**
grandmother	**a-màh, màh-màh**	**a-pòh, pòh-pó**
grandfather	**a-yèh, yèh-yé**	**a-gūng, gūng-gūng**

Divorcees and exes:

chìhn-douh làahmyáuh	ex-boyfriend	**chìhn-chāi**	ex-wife
chìhn-douh léuihyáuh	ex-girlfriend	**chìhn-fū**	ex-husband

Many of these terms can also be used in an extended way to address strangers of an appropriate age.

a-baak	sir (for older men)
a-pòh	madam (for older women)
sīnsāang	sir
síujé	miss, madam (for younger women)
tùhng-ji	comrade (for gay people)

Names

The usual format is surname – given name:

Jāu Yeuhn Faat	Chow Yun Fat (actor)
Wòhng Fēi	Faye Wong (pop diva)

The given name usually has two syllables in Hong Kong, often one in mainland China.

A few surnames have two syllables:

Āu Yèuhng Suhk Yìh	
Sī-tòuh Wàh	(Szeto Wah, democratic politician)

Maiden names are commonly used, as seen in some of the celebrities and distinguished women in Hong Kong. The husband's surname comes first, followed by the woman's maiden name and first name:

Chàhn Fōng Ōn-Sāng	Mrs Anson Chan (née Fong) – The first Chief Secretary of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

Fok Jyū Lìhng-Líng	Ms Loretta Fok (née Chu) – a former Miss Hong Kong

They are addressed as **Chàhn Táai** and **Fok Táai**. On the other hand, many married women do not go by their husband's surname, but are addressed as **síujé** or **léuihsih** as in **Fōng síujé** or **Fōng léuihsih** 'Ms Fong'. When single syllables, either given names or surnames are used, one of the following is normally added:

a The prefix **a-**, together with a change of tone (see Unit 3):

Tàahm Wihng Lèuhn	→ **A-Léun** Alan Tam (singer)
Mùih Yihm Fōng	→ **A-Mūi** Anita Mui (Canto-pop diva)
Làhm Jí Chèuhng	→ **A-Lēm** Alex Lam (singer)

b Colloquially, epithets are added to names:

Lóuh-Léi	Old Mr Lee
Fèih-Páang	fatty Pang (nickname of **Pàahng Dihng Hōng**, Christopher Patten, the last British governor of Hong Kong)

c The suffix **jái** for males and **léui** for females are attached to given names to show familiarity:

Faat-jái	Chow Yun Faat (actor)
Wàh-jái	Lau Dak Wah (Andy Lau, actor and singer)
Ōn-jái	Hui Chi On (singer)
Màhn-léui	Wu Si Man
Hàh-léui	Lau Lai Ha
Jyū-léui	Pearl

Occupational terms

It is often appropriate to address people by their occupation:

sīgēi	driver (taxi or bus drivers)
sīfú	craftsmen (implies a certain expertise, such as decorators, electricians, tailors)
lóuhbáau, **lóuhsai** or **bōsí**	boss
daaihlóu	(boss) – also used as an interjection

Some of the more professional terms are used together with surnames, as in **Māh sīfú** for a craftsman named Ma, **Chàhn leuhtsī** for a lawyer named Chan, **Jēung lóuhsī** for a teacher named Cheung, etc.

Taboo words

Superstitions live on in China, sometimes branding as taboo certain words which sound too much like an inauspicious term. The most commonly encountered examples are with numbers, notably **sei** (4) which rhymes with **séi** 'to die' (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 28). In addition, a number of words are subject to taboo because they resemble unlucky words:

Taboo word	*Substitute auspicious word*
hūng láu empty flat (as in **hūng** an ominous word associated with hazard and havoc)	**gāt láu**
hūng-sām choi water spinach (same reason as above)	**tūng choi**
fú-gwā bitter gourd (**fú** 'bitter', as in **sauh-fú** 'to suffer')	**lèuhng gwā**
sit tongue (too close to **siht** 'to lose money')	**leih** as in **ngàuh leih** ox tongue
yám gōn drink up (*lit.* empty the glass) **gōn** 'dry' is unwelcome as 'Money is water' **(Séui wàih chòih)**	**yám sing** cheers

The use of **gāt** to avoid **hūng** can be extended to **gāt chē** (empty vehicle), **gāt gēi** (empty plane) and so on. Estate agents, in particnlar, are carefnl:

gāan ūk gāt-jó géi go yuht	The house has been empty for a few months

Exercise 22.1

Choose a suitable term to address:

1 your boss
2 a plumber to whom you wish to be polite
3 a taxi driver
4 Mrs Wong
5 Chow Yun Faat (a famous actor), you are a fan of his
6 an old woman selling vegetables

Exercise 22.2

Provide a suitable greeting for the following occasions.

Example: You have just come home from work: **Ngóh fāan làih la!** (I'm back!)

1 You bumped into a friend on the aeroplane
2 a friend's wedding
3 Your friend has given birth to a new baby
4 a friend's birthday
5 at Christmas
6 A friend is on holiday
7 A friend is ill
8 when somebody proposes a toast
9 Chinese New Year
10 A friend is moving to a new country

Exercise 22.3

Introduce the following people, starting with **lī go/wái (haih)** this is . . . :

1 a colleague
2 your doctor
3 your professor
4 a classmate
5 your wife
6 your ex-husband
7 your first son
8 your ex-girlfriend
9 your former student
10 your husband

UNIT TWENTY-THREE

Particles and interjections

As a tonal language, Cantonese does not make use of intonation to the extent that English and other European languages do. Some of the typical functions of intonation, such as providing assurance or suggesting scepticism, are taken on by sentence particles. They range from purely grammatical ones to highly meaningful ones, and from optional to virtually obligatory (like **a** in some questions).

Using particles appropriately is best learnt from practice and experience. Many are untranslatable, the ideas being expressed in English by intonation patterns and tone of voice rather than words. A coy tone of voice, for example, would be rendered by **jēk**:

Léih máaih-m̀h-máaih béi ngóh jēk?
Will you buy it for me?

Some particles are characteristic of particular sentences:

a which goes with neutral questions (*Basic Cantonese*, Units 23–24)
lā/ā which accompany imperatives (*Basic Cantonese*, Unit 25)
mē and **àh** which form questions (Unit 17)
wo and **wóh** which appear in indirect speech (Unit 21)

Evidence and uncertainty

A group of particles suggests something about the status of the information in the sentence – how widely known or established it is, etc. **lō** gives a suggestion that what is said should be obvious:

Q: **Léih daaih-hohk dnhk géi dō lìhn sīn bātyihp a?**
How long does it take to graduate from university?

A: **Sāam lìhn lō**
Three years (of course, everyone knows that)
Q: **Kéuih gám jouh jānhaih móuh léihyàuh ge**
It's unreasonable for him to do this
A: **Jauh haih lō!**
Yes, of course!

Māmìh:	**Léih háidouh jouh māt a?**	Mum:	What are you doing?
Go jái:	**Jouh gūngfo lō**	Son:	Doing homework, obviously

lō is often used together with **maih** 'then' which suggests that what follows is an obvious conclusion:

Léih jouh dāk mhōisām maih wán daih yih fahn gūng lō
If you're not happy in your work, then find another job

Ngóh wàahngdihm dākhàahn maih yeuk léih chēut làih kīng-háh-gái lō
Since I'm free anyway, I ask you to come out and have a chat

Chèuhng tàuhfaat daai ngáahn-géng gó go maih haih kéuih chìhnchāi lō
(*lit.* long hair wear glasses that one then is his ex-wife)
The one with long hair and glasses is his ex-wife

āma draws attention to something which should be known, typically in response to a question:

A: **Dímgáai gam chìh juhng meih fāan làih a?**
How come she's still not back?

B: **Juhng hōi-gán-wúi āma**
Because she's still in the meeting (of course)

Contrast the same response with **gwa**:

B: **Juhng hōi-gán-wúi gwa** She's still in the meeting, I guess

gwa here indicates uncertainty – the sentence contains an element of guesswork:

A: **Léih gú kéuih wúih-m̀h-wúih làih lē**
Guess whether she'll come or not

B: **Wúih gwa**
I guess she will

Similarly, a common response is **haih gwa** 'I guess so', 'I suppose so' or **mhaih gwa** 'I guess not'.

Other common uses of **āma** include:

- Teaching or reminding people of rules and facts which may or may not be obvious, as when a parent is teaching her child the social expectation that one greets (**giu**) a person by their name:

  Léih yiu giu yàhn āma You should greet people, you know

  To make an excuse, as when a parent tries to explain why the children are so naughty:

  Kéuih juhng sai āma. Dím sīk gam dō yéh a?
  He's still young. How could he know so much?

- To correct a mistake or faulty information, as when one gets on the wrong bus and the bus driver says:

  Mhaih sahp hou a, yīnggōi daap yāt houh āma
  You should take number 1, not number 10

Particles and questions

In addition to **a** in neutral questions, a variety of particles can be added to achieve particular rhetorical effects:

há and **hó** invite agreement, much like a question 'tag' in English. **há** is typically added to instructions ('OK?'):

Léih geijyuh daai fūng seun fāan làih a há?
Remember to bring the letter back, OK?

Léih yiu síusām jiugu jihgéi a há?
You've got to take care of yourself, OK?

hó is used to check 'isn't that right?'

Gāan ūk gau saai daaih a, hó?
The big is big enough, huh?

Gaau daaih-hohk géi sānfú ge, hó?
Quite a task to teach at the university, isn't it?

Contractions

The particles beginning with the vowel **a** combine with preceding particles to form contracted syllables:

	+ a	*+ āma*	*+ àh*
ge	**ga**	**gāma**	**gàh**
je/jē	**ja**	**jāma**	**jàh**
la		**lāma**	**làh**

The effect of the contraction combines that of the two individual particles involved. We can see this clearly in the case of the contracted forms with **je** 'only':

i **Dāk ńgh go yàhn làih-jó ja, kèihtā yàhn lē?**
Only five people have come, what about the others?
(*lit.* fewer than expected, the news being related in a neutral way)

ii **Dāk ńgh go yàhn làih-jó jāma; msái gēng m̀h gau yéh sihk**
Only five people have come; there's no need to worry that there won't be enough to eat

iii **Dāk ńgh go yàhn làih-jó jàh! Bīngo bōng ngóh sihk saai dī yéh a?**
What, only five people have come! Who'll help me eat all this food?
(*lit.* fewer than expected, constituting a disappointment)

Version i with **je** and **a** is neutral, while in version ii, **jāma** combines the downplaying sense of **je** and the obvious consequence (suggested by **āma**) that there is nothing to worry about. In version iii, **jàh** combines the downplaying sense of **je** and the disapproval or disappointment suggested by **àh**.

Variants of ge

In addition to the contracted forms **ga**, **gāma** and **gàh** as shown above (on **ga** see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 25), the important assertive particle **ge** also has the variants **gé** and **gá**. **gé** has two senses:

- puzzlement about a situation:

Dímgáai gāan fóng gam lyuhn gé?	How come the room is so messy?
Kéuih dōu m̀h daap ngóh gé	He's not answering me (why not?)

- reservation about a statement:

Gám dōu hóu gé	That would be fine too, I suppose
Kéuih géi yáuh-yìhng gé	Well, I suppose he's quite stylish . . .

gá suggests a stronger sense of reservation, especially in the sequence **sīn dāk gá**:

Léih yīnggói jī gá	You ought to know that
Léih jouh yéh mhóu gam maahn sīn dāk gá?	Can't you try not to work so slowly?

Q: **Bātyùh léih heui paakhei lā?**	Why don't you make a film?
A: **Paak-jó chēut làih yáuh yàhn tái sīn dāk gá**	Only if there are people to see it when it's made

Combining particles

Combinations of particles, like contracted forms, combine the meanings and functions of the individual particles involved. Common combinations include:

ge + la (assertion + relevance):

Fūng seun yíhgīng gei-jó chēut heui ge la
The letter's already been sent out

Ngóhdeih jauh dou ge la
We're almost there

ge + mē (assertion + query):

Jānhaih m̀h béi dāk ngóh jī ge mē?
Am I really not allowed to know?

Ngóh m̀h yahp dāk làih ge mē?
Can't I come in?

Léih chīsin ge mē?
Are you crazy?

One characteristic of such combinations is that a particle preceding another can be reduced from a full vowel to an unstressed vowel ([ə] or 'schwa') which we may write simply as **e**:

la + mē → le mē

Léih yíhwàih gám jauh hóyíh ngāak dóu ngóh ge la mē?
Did you actually think you could cheat me by doing this?

Interjections and exclamations

Common interjections include the following:

Hóu yéh	Great!	**Wa (háai)!**	Wow!
Aiya!	Oh no!	**óh**	ah-ha
séi la/bai la	uh-oh!	**Chē!**	So what! (belittling)
yí?	hah?		

Hóu yéh, yáuh syut-gōu sihk!	Great, we have ice cream (to eat)!
Aiya, sèhng sān sāp saai!	Oh no, I'm wet all over!

wa expresses surprise or shock:

Wa (háai)! Léih máaih gam dō láihmaht gé!
Wow, you bought so many gifts!

Wa! Léih jíu dou go tàuh gam chí Dahksáu gé!
Wow! You cut your hair such that you look so much like the Chief of the SAR!

Wa! Kéuih ga-jó go yīkmaahn fu-hòuh a!
Wow! She married a billionaire!

yí? expresses surprise plus an element of puzzlement:

Yí, dīmgáai douh mùhn hōi-jó gé? Haih-mhaih yáuh yàhn yahp-gwo làih a?
Why is the door open? Did anyone get in here before?

Yí, yùhnlòih dá cho houhmáh
Huh, I dialled the wrong number

Yí, māt léih dōu làih-jó àh?
Hey, you've come too?

óh 'ah-ha' is usually lengthened to express realization and an element of surprise:

Óh, yùhulòih lī go sīnji haih hūngsáu
Ah-hah, this one is the murderer (finally realizing the real culprit at the end of the story)

Óh, ngóh jūngyū mìhngbaahk dímgáai léih yiu chìhjīk
Oh, I finally understand why you had to resign

chē! is disparaging or expresses contempt:

Chē! Léih hóu lēk mē? Haih yàhn dōu sīk lā
Huh! You think you're so clever? Anybody knows that

chōi is typically used by women in response to someone's inauspicious remarks:

A: **Kéuih sèhngyaht sihk yīn; hóu yùhngyih sāang ngàahm ga**
He always smokes; he could easily get cancer

B: **Chōi, m̀h hóu lyún āp yéh lā** Don't talk nonsense
or **Chōi gwo léih, daaih gāt leih sih**

(a set expression to neutralize the taboo topic, like 'Touch wood' or 'Let's keep our fingers crossed')

Exercise 23.1

Respond to the question given, using the particle **lō** or **āma** for obviousness and **gwa** where uncertainty is indicated.

1	Q:	**Heui Jīmsājéui daap géi dōhouh bāsí a?**	Which bus goes to Tsimshatsui?
	A:	**Ńgh houh ______**	The Number 5
2	Q:	**Kéuih dímgáai gam sēungsām a?**	Why is she so sad?
	A:	**Sāt-lyún ______**	Probably because she's fallen out of love
3	Q:	**Dímgáai kéuih móuh fāan-gūng a?**	Why didn't she go to work?
	A:	**Heui-jó tái yīsāng ______**	Because she went to see the doctor
4	Q:	**Léih tàuhfaat dím gáai bin-jó sīk gé?**	How come your hair has changed colour?
	A:	**Yíhm-jó ______**	Because it's been dyed

5	Q: **Heui Jimsājéui daap géi dōhouh bāsí a?**	Which bus goes to Tsimshatsui?
	A: **Yāt houh ______**	The Number 1, I suppose
6	Q: **Dímgáai kéuih móuh fāan-gūng a?**	Why didn't she go to work?
	A: **Heui-jó tái yīsāng ______**	I guess she went to see the doctor
7	Q: **Dímgáai gam chìh ga?**	Why are you so late?
	A: **Seuihdouh sāk-chē ______**	The tunnel was jammed, you know
8	Q: **Géi dōhouh gāau jōu a?**	On which day do we pay the rent?
	A: **Yāt houh ______**	The first

Exercise 23.2

Add the particles **há** or **hó** as appropriate:

1 **Léihdeih yiu tēng pòhpó wah, m̀h hóu láu-gái a ______**
You have to obey grandma. Stop playing up
2 **Léih màaih-jó dāan ge le ______**
You have paid the bill, right?
3 **Léih juhng meih jáu jyuh a ______**
You're not leaving yet, right?
4 **Haih ngāam léih sīn hóu góng a ______**
Say it only if it's right, OK
5 **Léih dá-jó dihnwá heui ūkkéi la ______**
You called home, right?
6 **Léih mhóu jāuwàih heui, hái ūkkéi yāusīk dō dī lā ______**
Don't go anywhere, just have plenty of rest at home, OK?
7 **Dī chēung sāan saai, douh mùhn só hóu la ______**
The windows are all closed and the door locked, right?
8 **Tīngyaht gin lā ______**
See you tomorrow, OK?

Exercise 23.3

Add an appropriate interjection from the following:
wa(háai), baih/séi la, chē, chōi, óh, yí

Example: **<u>Baih/Séi la</u>, mgin-jó tìuh sósìh** Oh dear, I've lost my key

1 **______, kéuih hóu leng mē?**
She's pretty? (contempt)

2 ______, **jauh gau jūng la, juhng meih jouh saai** (damned)
Time's almost up and I still haven't finished
3 ______, **māt kéuih gihn sāam tùhng ngóh yāt yeuhng gé!** (surprised and puzzled)
How come her dress is the same as mine!
4 ______, **léih tou fānsā hóu leng a!** (surprised and impressed)
Your wedding gown is beautiful
5 ______, **gám ge yéh dōu góng dāk chēut gé! Faai dī lēu háu-séui góng gwo a!**
(*lit.* such things can speak out! Quickly rinse saliva say again!)
How could you speak of such things! Rinse out your mouth and say it again
6 ______, **kéuihdeih haih hīngmúi lèihge, m̀h haih léuhng gūngpó**
I see, they are really brother and sister, not a couple

UNIT TWENTY-FOUR

Colloquial syntax

Colloquial spoken Cantonese contains numerous features which would not be found in writing, and which rarely appear in textbooks either. Some of these patterns do not sit well with conventional ideas about Chinese grammar, with its fixed subject–verb–object word order. These deviations deserve mention because they are so commonly heard, at least in informal situations.

The pronoun kéuih

In higher registers the third person pronoun **kéuih** is used only to refer to people. In colloquial speech its use is frequently extended:

- referring to things rather than people, especially in imperatives:

  Léih sihk màaih kéuih lā! Eat it up!

- referring to the object of **jēung** (see Unit 10):

  Ngóhdeih bātyùh jēung dī gauh sāam dám-jó kéuih
  Let's get rid of these old clothes
  (Note that **kéuih** here can even refer to a plural noun phrase.)

- referring to nothing at all:

Yám sing kéuih	Bottoms up, cheers!
Wah jī kéuih	Couldn't care less
Ngóh wah jī kéuih gáu-chāt	I couldn't care less about '97 (title of a 1990s song)

- reinforcing a noun phrase:

A-Lìhng kéuih m̀h lōu la	Ling is leaving (her job)
Ngóh tùhng a-Sām kéuih haih tō-yáu	Sam and I are dating

Afterthoughts and dislocations

Speakers have afterthoughts: adding some detail, modification or condition after completing a sentence. Some of these patterns have become so common that they no longer feel like afterthoughts, but merely serve as alternative formulations for the same given content, much as in English: 'Pretty confident, she is'. This pattern is termed 'right dislocation' because the right-hand part, after the comma, appears to be out of place. Some of the elements most frequently 'dislocated' include:

- Subject pronouns and noun phrases:

Séi-jó fó la, ga chē	The car's stalled
Gām chi daaih wohk la, léih	(You're) in trouble this time, you are

- Modal auxiliaries (see *Basic Cantonese*, Unit 20). These verbs have a particular tendency to appear as afterthoughts, serving to modify the preceding sentence.

Léihdeih sái sáu a, yiu	You need to wash your hands
Hóu faai fāan làih, yīnggōi	(He) should be back soon
Yāt jahn gāan tóuh ngoh ga, léih wúih	In a while you'll be hungry (mother to son)

Note how both the subject and the auxiliary are dislocated together here.

- Adverbs: placed at the end of the sentence, they serve to evaluate the whole proposition:

Hóu hāt-yàhn-jāng, jānhaih	Really disgusting, it is
Géi yáuh-yisī, dōu	It was quite interesting, actually
Ngóhdeih mhóu heui, bātyùh	Let's not go
Yáuh-móuh m̀h mìhng a, juhng?	Is there anything you don't understand, anything else?

- Resultative constructions with **dou** (Unit 14):

Gáau dou ngóh hóu máugjáng It made me frustrated
→ a **hóu máugjáng, gáau dou ngóh**
or b **ngóh hóu máugjáng, gáau dou**

- Subordinate clauses and conditionals: although 'if' and 'because' clauses normally come first in the sentence (see Units 19, 20), it is also possible to add them after the main clause as afterthoughts:

Léih muhn jauh tái-háh bouhjí lā
If you're bored, read the newspaper for a while

Léih tái-háh bouhjí lā, muhn jauh
Read the newspaper for a while, if you're bored, that is

Classifiers

In some slang usages a classifier other than the usual **go** is used for people:

gó tìuh yáu	that guy (colloquial)
léih tìuh jái/léui	your boyfriend/girlfiend (vulgar)
wuhn gwo gihn	change one's boyfriend/girlfriend
giu (jek) gāi/aap	call a prostitute (*lit.* chicken)/gigolo (*lit.* duck)

The effect is to treat human beings as physical entities, with a demeaning effect:

Léih tìuh jái góng yéh sèhng jek aap gám ga (from a film)
The way your boyfriend talks is just like some gigolo

This usage is sometimes 'corrected' as in the following example:

Léuihjái haih yāt go-go ge, mhaih yāt tìuh-tìuh ge (from a comic film)
Girls are supposed to be referred to by **go** not by **tìuh**

The humour of this line lies in the contrast between the neutral register **go** and the low register, vulgar use of **tìuh** for women. Similarly, nouns formed with **gwái** may take the classifier **jek** as used for animals:

Ngóh ūkkéi yáuh léuhng jek wā-gwái
There are two noisy devils in my house

A number of measures are used colloquially for time, money, etc.:

yāt pùhn séui ten thou'(sand dollars)

yāt gauh séui	one hundred dollars
daaih-lāp-lóu	a 'big shot' (important person)
yāt lāp jūng	an hour (normally **yāt go jūngtàuh**)

Léih jī-m̀h-jī ngóh dáng-jó léih sèhng lāp jūng a?
Do you realise I've been waiting for you for a whole flipping hour?

Gāmyaht dī daaih-lāp-lóu làih saai
Today all the big shots were here

There are also some colloquial verbal classifiers:

dá kéuih géi yéh	hit him a few times (normally **dá kéuih géi háh**)
dá (yāt) pōu gihng ge	have a good game (**dá-gēi**, to play video games)

The magic of gwái

One of the most versatile elements in colloquial spoken Cantonese, **gwái**, gives a native flavour and colour to ordinary daily expressions in the language. From the Cantonese learner's point of view, to master the different properties of **gwái** may be difficult without sufficient exposure to authentic input as spoken by ordinary people on the street. Examples are typically absent from textbooks which follow the prescriptive tradition in providing formal, prestigious examples for learners. The literal meaning of **gwái** is 'ghost', 'devil' but it has taken on other meanings which are extensions of the original ones, such as mischievousness, frivolousness and strangeness, etc. Chinese people generally have a rich **gwái** culture, and Cantonese is no exception: the ghost festival (**gwái-jit**) falls on the fourteenth day of the seventh month of the Chinese calendar, which is the Chinese equivalent of Hallow'een in the West. **Gwái** commonly appears:

- As the final element of a compound:

láahn-gwái a lazy person **móuhdáam-gwái** a coward
sēui-gwái rascal (may be affectionate, referring to someone intimate)

- As the initial element of a nominal compound:

gwáilóu	adult male foreigner	**gwáipòh**	adult female foreigner
gwáijái	child or teenage male foreigner	**gwáimūi**	child or teenage female foreigner

In these expressions, **gwái** refers to foreigners who have Western features. A common practice is to refer to Westerners as **gwái** as opposed to **yàhn** 'humans':

Kéuih haih yàhn dihnghaih gwái a?
(*lit.* he's a human being or a ghost?)
Is he Chinese or Western?

Ngóh dī jáiléui go yéung bun yàhn bun gwái
My children look half Chinese and half Western

Hóu chói ngóh lóuhbáan gwái-gwái-déi ge (from an accountant)
Fortunately my boss is pretty Westernized

These terms have lost the 'devilish' connotations and are hardly insulting, though in polite company including foreigners they are avoided, **sāi-yàhn** (Westerner) and **ngoihgwok-yàhn** (foreigner) being used instead.

- With adjective phrases: for emphasis and intensification **gwái** can occur after degree modifers such as **hóu** 'very', **gam** 'so' as an intensifier to modify an adjective:

Gām jīu gam gwái dung gé!	It's so cold this morning!
Dímgáai léih gam gwái yīmjīm ga?	Why are you so choosy?

gwái can be inserted in the middle of a bisyllabic adjective:

màhfàahn	troublesome	→	**màh-gwái-fàahn**	really troublesome
sih-daahn	indifferent	→	**sih-gwái-daahn**	It doesn't matter a bit
dō-yǹh	superfluous	→	**dō-gwái-yǹh**	totally unnecessary

- **gwái** may come between the verb and aspect marker:

Ga gēi waaih-gwái-jó	The machine has gone and broken down
Gūngsī kám-gwái-jynh dī chánmàhn	The company is covering up the scandals

These usages express frustration or annoyance. Although mildly expletive, **gwái** is not particularly offensive to native speakers.

- In questions, where **gwái** can also occur between **bīn** and **go** as in **bīn-gwái-go** 'who on earth' or between **bīn** and classifier:

Bīn gwái ga chē jong fā ngóh gó ga a? Which damned car scratched mine?

Bīn gwái jek sīn wúih sīng a?	Which damned (share) will rise?
mātyéh what → **māt-gwái-yéh**	What on earth, what the hell
jouh mātyéh what for → **jouh māt-gwái-yéh?**	What on earth for?
Léih gáau māt-gwái-yéh a?	What on earth are you doing?
Kéuih jouh māt-gwái-yéh gam hōisām a?	What on earth is he so happy about?

As the examples show, the effect is to challenge the point made or words used.

- In rhetorical questions (see Unit 17):

Gwái jī mē?	How on earth should I know?
Gwái bōng kéuih a	Only the devil will help him, i.e. nobody will

Exercise 24.1

Express the italicized part of the sentence as an 'afterthought'.

Example: ***Ngóh wah* móuh hēimohng la**
→ **Móuh hēimohng la, ngóh wah**

1 ***Gāan ūk* maaih-jó meih a?**
Have you sold the house yet?
2 ***Bātyùh* léihdeih yātchàih heui lā?**
Why don't you go together?
3 **Ngóh chìh dou yānwaih *Sījísāan Seuihdouh* sāk-chē a**
I'm late because the Lion Rock Tunnel was congested
4 **Ngóh *jānhaih* béi léih haak séi la**
I was really scared by you
5 ***Ngóh jī* léih yātdihng wúih lám dóu baahnfaat ge**
I know that you definitely will think of a solution
6 **Juhng yáuh sìhgaan, *hóyíh* maahn-máau góng lohk-heui ā**
There's still time, (you) can go on talking slowly
7 **Léih *wúih* tàih jóu teuiyāu mē?**
You will retire early?
8 **Léih *gei-jyuh* síusām jā-chē a**
Remember to drive carefully

Exercise 24.2

Add the appropriate colloquial classifier

Example: **Ngóh jouh-jó sèhng sāam lāp jūng**
I've been working a whole three hours

1 **Kéuih _____ jái géi chyun wo**	Her boyfriend is showing an attitude
2 **Ngóh je-jó géi _____ séui béi go tùhngsih**	I lent a few hundred dollars to a colleague
3 **Kéuih jeuk dou hóu chíh _____ gāi gám**	She dresses like a prostitute
4 **Léih _____ léuih géi yìhng wo**	Your girlfriend is pretty cool
5 **Léih gam faai wuhn-jó _____ sān ge**	You got yourself a new one (boyfriend) so soon
6 **Kéuih lāu dou dá-jó ngóh géi _____**	He's so angry that he hit me a few times
7 **Kéuih ūkkéi yáuh sāam _____ máhlāu-jái**	She's got three monkeys (kids) at home
8 **Ngóh tùhng kéuih bōu-jūk bōu-jó géi _____ jūng**	I've been talking on the phone with him for a few hours

Exercise 24.3

Add **gwái** to indicate frustration in the following statements and questions.

Example: **Ngóh (gwái) jī mē** How (on earth) should I know?

1 **Tou hei hóu muhn**	The film was pretty (damn) boring
2 **Bīngo háidouh chòuh a?**	Who (on earth) is making such a racket?
3 **Faisih heui la**	There's no (earthly) point in going
4 **Ga chē maaih-jó la**	The car's (damn well) been sold
5 **Léih heui-jó bīndouh a?**	Where (the hell) have you been?
6 **Gam chèuhng-hei ga!**	He's so long-winded!
7 **Bīngo ga chē jó-jyuh saai a?**	Whose (damned) car is blocking the way?
8 **Ngóh m̀h lōu la**	I'm (damn well) quitting (my job).

UNIT TWENTY-FIVE

Code-mixing and loanwords

One of the most colourful features of Cantonese is the incorporation of foreign words – chiefly of English origin, but also from Japanese and other sources. Fluent bilinguals such as professional people and students can often be heard mixing Cantonese and English in the course of the same sentence. This typical bilingual behaviour is known as code-mixing. Because it is associated with high levels of education, residence abroad and a cosmopolitan outlook, it has a certain prestige in some circles. One Hong Kong radio station revels in its bilinguality:

First DJ: Next we have bilingual news
Second DJ: **Haih a, hóu bilingual a** (yes, very bilingual)

A morning radio show is entitled 'jo good morning sun' in which the English 'good morning' is playfully inserted into Cantonese **jóu sàhn** 'good morning'.

Readers should be warned that code-mixing as described in this unit is sometimes frowned upon and felt to be 'not Chinese' or somehow a corrupted form of language. One can hardly ignore the phenomenon, however, in describing Cantonese as it is spoken in Hong Kong. Code-mixing is also found wherever individuals or societies are bilingual, and is a natural part of their use of language. Apart from its sociological interest, code-mixing is quite systematic; it has its own grammar.

The way code-mixing works is that English words are incorporated as far as possible into the sentence patterns of Cantonese. Consequently, Cantonese grammar is applied to English words, rather than vice versa:

- Aspect markers such as **jó, jyuh** and **gán** are added to English verbs:

Ngóh yíhgīng present-jó	I've already presented
Kéuih preg-jó géi loih a?	How long has she been pregnant?
Kéuihdeih yìhgā check-gán	They're just checking

Dáng kéuih enjoy-háh	Let him enjoy it

Ngóh daai go léui heui in-háh (interview → **in**)
I'm taking my daughter to have an interview

Léih yiu lám baahnfaat keep-jyuh léih lóuhgūng
You have to think of a way to keep your husband

- Similarly, English verbs may appear with verbal particles such as **fāan**, **yùhn** and **saai**:

Ngóhdeih ngāam-ngāam shop yùhn fāan lèih
We're just back from shopping

Yāt yáuh sīusīk, jīkhāak call fāan ngóh
Call me back as soon as there's any news

Kéuih yám-jó dī jáu, sèhng go high saai
She drank the wine and got all high

- An English combination of verb and object can be separated in accordance with Cantonese grammar:

Ganhlín bndget cnt-jó hóu dō	Last year's budget was cut a lot
Mgōi léih hold-jyuh tìuh line sīn	Would you please hold the line for a minute

- English nouns are given an appropriate classifier as in:

tìuh for 'line' (Cantonese **sin**)
jek for 'model'
fahn for 'contract'

- Questions may be formed by reduplicating English verbs and adjectives:

happy → **hēp-m̀h-hēp-pí?**	Are you happy?
like → **lāi-m̀h-lāikí?**	Do you like (it)?
delay → **de-m̀h-delay a?**	Will you delay (it)?
Gūngsī de-m̀h-delay lī go project a?	Is the company delaying ths project?

Note that 'like' has been made into two syllables, **lāikí**, while in **hēppí**, the final syllable is in the high rising tone (see below on loanwords).

- The potential constructions with **m̀h** and particle surround an English verb:

Ngóh yìhgā check m̀h dóu	I can't check now
Léih predict m̀h dóu	You can't predict

Even English prepositions may appear:

Go sáudói around yāt chīn mān dóu
The handbag is around a thousand dollars

Nī go project haih under ngóh go department ge (from a civil servant)
This project is under my department

Nī jek sàhnsīn gú within géi yaht jauh sīng-jó yāt púih (from a stockbroker)
This miraculous stock has doubled its value within a few days

Note that these fill a gap in the sense that the nearest Cantonese equivalents would come after the noun (for example, **géi yaht jīloih** 'within a few days').

Code-mixing as a relief strategy

Up to a point, code-mixing can be a useful strategy for learners who lack the vocabulary they need: just substitute an English word for the missing item, and the result is likely to be understood, at least by fluent bilingual speakers. This works especially well for technical terms; computer and cyber-related words, for example, are regularly used by professionals and students in their conversation despite the availability of translation equivalents:

ICQ (I seek you, communication software on Internet)	(no Cantonese equivalent)
IT (Information Technology)	**jīseun fōgeih**
CD/CD-ROM	**(dihnlóuh) gwōngdíp**
cyber-classroom	**hēuiyíh gaausāt**
upload	**seuhng chyùhn**
download	**hah joi**

One of the reasons Cantonese speakers mix is that the Cantonese terms are not well known or are even clumsy. For example, **chyùhn-jān** translates 'fax'. The verb **fēk** and the noun **fēk-sí** are preferred, while CD-ROM seems simpler than **dihnlóuh gwōngdíp**.

Loanwords

Although we have generally been writing them in standard English spelling, the English words often undergo some changes to make them sound closer to Cantonese words. The word 'class', for example, may be pronounced **klā-sí** or even **kā-sí** in the sense of having class. By this process, the English words eventually become assimilated to Cantonese and become part of the everyday vocabulary, as in the case of words such as **bāsí** (bus) and **dīksí** (taxi). Known as loanwords, these are used by monolingual Cantonese speakers as well as by bilinguals.

Kéuih jeuigahn sīk-jó go lengléui, hóu hēppí
He recently got to know a pretty girl and is very happy

tái show → **tái sōu**
show qualification → **sōn kōlí**

Gāmlín bahtīn làuhhàhng nī go colour tùbng sexy look, dáng daaihgā hóyíh sōu-sōu kōlí
(*lit.* this year summer popular this colour and sexy look, let everyone can show show qualification)
This summer this colour and sexy look are in, letting people show off their figure
(programme on fashion magazines)

If a word ends in a consonant, usually a new syllable with high rising tone is created:

fax → **fēk-sí** (noun), but **fēk** when used as a verb:

Ngóh fēk fahn sānchíng-bíu béi léih ā
Let me fax the application form to you

gas → **gēsí**	**sāai gēsí**	waste one's breath
taste → **tēisí**	**móuh tēisí**	without taste
bus → **bāsí**	**daap bāsí**	catch the bus
size → **sāaisí**	**Jeuk mātyéh sāaisí?**	What size do you wear?
fuse → **fiusí**	**sīu fēusí**	burn the fuse
face → **fēisí**	**móuh saai fēisí**	completely lose face
tip(s) → **tīpsí**	**béi tīpsí**	give a tip
fans → **fēnsí**	**Ngóh haih léih ge chīukāp fēnsí**	I'm your super fan
film → **fēilám**	**máaih fēilám**	buy (photographic) film
fail → **fēihlóu**	**Gām chi yauh fēihlóu àh?**	Did you flunk again this time?

pass → **pāsìh**	A: **Léih háau sèhug dím a?**	How did the exam go?
	B: **Pāsìh lō**	Passed
deuce → **dīusìh**	**Daih sei guhk dīusìh**	The fourth game is deuce

copy this file → **kāp nī go fāilóu**
print out → **pīn chēut làih**
short-circuited → **sōt-jó**
confirm → firm (result of shortening)

Tīngyaht sīn firm dóu go itiu wo (from a travel agent)
(*lit.* tomorrow only confirm the itinerary)
I can't confirm the itinerary until tomorrow

Japanese words and phrases

As many aspects of Japanese culture have infiltrated Cantonese society, some of the related Japanese expressions have been adopted:

kālāai-ōukēi	karaoke
sauhsī	sushi
wūdūng (mihn)	udon (noodles)
sah-yoh-lā-làh	goodbye (based on **sayonara**, with **n** becoming **l**)

More commonly, Japanese phrases are translated literally using the Cantonese pronunciations for the Japanese Kanji characters:

yī-jī-bāan	super, first-rate (based on **i chi baan**)
sān-dāngchèuhng	new product (*lit.* new arrival)
bītsaat-geih	secret lethal weapon (*lit.* sure winning technique)
chō-táiyihm	first experience
daaih chēut hyut	big sale (*lit.* big out blood)
daaih got yáhn	big sale (*lit.* big cut . . .)
gāan-bā-dē	cheer on
séjān-jaahp	portfolio, series of pictures (sometimes nude)
yàhnhei (gāpsīng)	(sudden rise in) popularity

The pattern **yāt juhk** 'one race' refers to a certain category of people:

séuhng-bāan yāt juhk	(*lit.* go work one race) working people
keep-fit yāt juhk	the keep-fit crowd
dāan-sān yāt juhk	the single crowd
baahu-leug yāt juhk	beauty queens

Exercise 25.1

Using the English verb as given in the translation, add the verb and aspect marker or verbal particle:

Example: **Ngóh yíhgīng <u>present-jó</u> la** I've already presented

1	**Léih ______ yīsāng meih a?**	Have you called the doctor yet?
2	**Faai dī ______ ngāam go mahtmáh lā**	Set the code back to the correct one quickly
3	**Kéuih haih-maih ______ a?**	Has he gone mad? (*lit.* is he short-circuited?)
4	**Jingfú ______ lī go policy**	The government is reviewing the policy
5	**Ngóh tùhng kéuih ______**	I've swapped with him
6	**Ngóh ______ kéuih géi chi**	I've dated him a few times
7	**Léih jēung cheque yíhgīng ______**	Your cheque has already cleared
8	**Kéuih ngāam-ngāam ______ fahn gūng**	He has just quit his job
9	**Bātyùh léih ______ làih béi ngóh lā?**	Why don't you send it back to me?
10	**Gūngsī yìhgā ______ lī géi jek sān product**	The company is promoting these new products

Exercise 25.2

Form questions based on the English verbs and adjectives provided

Example: Entertaining:
Kéuih gokdāk hóu full He feels full
→ **Kéuih gokdāk full-m̀h-full a?** Does he feel full?

1 **Kéuih tùhng léih hóu friend (fēn)**
He and you are friendly
2 **Léih predict dóu ngóh séung dím a?**
Can you predict how I want it?
3 **Kéuihdeih jeuigahn hóu busy**
They've been busy lately
4 **Lóuhbáan invite dī client heui dá golf**
The boss invited the clients to play golf
5 **Ngóh hóu enjoy tái kéuih dī e-mail**
I enjoy reading his e-mail

6 **Lóuhbáau tái yùhn go report, hóu impress**
When the boss finished reading the report he was impressed
7 **Go exam hóu easy a**
The exam was easy
8 **Kéuih béi fān hóu fair ga**
He's fair in marking
9 **Go show gau saai entertaining**
The show is pretty entertaining
10 **Kéuih m̀h delete go file**
He won't delete the file

Exercise 25.3

Identify the English loanwords in the following sentences (transcribed in Yale romanization):

1 **Go fāailóu mgin-jó wo**
2 **Deui hàaih haih gafē-sīk ge**
3 **Léih séung-m̀h-séung sihk jēléi a?**
4 **Ngóhdeih daap wēnjái heui hóu m̀h hón a?**
5 **Dī sāammàhn-yú maaih saai la**
6 **Léih ūkkéi géi houh lūmbá a?**
7 **Kéuih jíng dī sāléut hóu hóu-meih**
8 **Ngóu lóuhgūng hóu jūngyi sihk Faatgwok jīsí**
9 **Léih máaih-jó yinsō meih a?**
10 **Ngóh giu-jó jāudáyú-tōng**

KEY TO EXERCISES

Unit 1 Consonants and vowels

Exercise 1.4 1 làahm-sih 2 go-hói 3 yùh-sāan 4 ḿh gok wuih-yīh 5 óh lāu go léih 6 Gūn Tòhng 7 Góngsāi 8 M̀h Méih-laih 9 Gok Fu-sìhng 10 Làahm-gīng

Unit 2 Tone contours

Exercise 2.1 1 low rising 23 vs. 33 mid level 2 low rising 23 vs. 25 high rising 3 low falling 21 vs. 55 high level 4 low rising 23 vs. 22 low level 5 high level 55 vs. 22 low level 6 mid level 33 vs. 22 low level 7 high level 55 vs. 25 high rising 8 high rising 25 vs. 23 low rising

Unit 3 Changed tones

Exercise 3.1 1 **chau-cháu-déi** rather smelly 2 **laahn-láan-déi** a bit broken 3 **waaih-wáai-déi** not working very well 4 **guih-gúi-déi** a bit tired 5 **lyuhn-lyún-déi** rather messy 6 **chèuhng-chéung-déi** rather long 7 **lèuhng-léung-déi** rather cool 8 **hàhn-hán-déi** rather itchy 9 **làhm-lám-déi** rather tender, soft 10 **lùhng-lúng-déi** a bit deaf 11 **laaht-láat-déi** rather spicy hot 12 **mìhng-míng-déi** understand a little (not fully understand) 13 **jī-jī-déi** know a little (about something) 14 **gwōng-gwōng-déi** rather bright 15 **sin-sín-déi** rather slippery

Exercise 3.2 1 gong-tíu 2 hói-méi 3 gauh-lín 4 tói-mín 5 ōnchyùhn-dáai 6 tō-háai 7 goklōk-táu 8 máaih-láu 9 taaiyèuhng ngáahn-géng 10 Hēung-góng-déi 11 sānmán 12 góján 13 gójahn-sí 14 diht lohk déi 15 yáuh yāt páai 16 sān-léung 17 sān-lóng 18 sī-dái 19 dá màhjéuk 20 boují tàuhtíu

Exercise 3.3 1 háp 2 tìuh 3 díp 4 bóng 5 pín 6 dihp 7 tíu 8 hahp 9 pùhn 10 pún

Exercise 3.4 1 tīngmāan 2 pòhpō 3 séi-ngaahng-pāai 4 goklōk 5 lèuih-lēui 6 móuh géi lōi/lói 7 hēunghá-mūi 8 mòuh-mōu gūngjái 9 ngáahn-yāp-mōu 10 sáujī-mēi

Unit 4 Reduplication

Exercise 4.1 1 Gāan ūk kéih-kéih-léih-léih 2 Go léui baahk-baahk-jehng-jehng 3 Tou hei póu-póu-tūng-tūng 4 Ngóhdeih ūkkéi yiht-yiht-laauh-laauh 5 Gó gāan hohkhaauh séi-séi-báan-báan 6 Lóuhbáan gāmyaht máng-máng-jáng-jáng 7 Go dīksí sīgēi chōu-chōu-lóuh-lóuh 8 Kéuih go jái gōu-gōu-daaih-daaih 9 Ngóh fahn gūng ōn-ōn-dihng-dihng 10 Gó go móhngkàuh mìhngsīng daaih-daaih-jek-jek

Exercise 4.2 1 Kéuih sailóu hàhm-hàhm-wùh-wùh daapyìng wàahn chín 2 Kéuihdeih gáan-gáan-dāan-dāan bouji sān ūk 3 Kéuih fuhmóuh sān-sān-fú-fú yéuhng daaih kéuih 4 Nī gāan gūngsī jìng-jìng-sīk-sīk syūnbou pocháan 5 Ngóh hēimohng léih kàhn-kàhn-lihk-lihk duhk-syū 6 Kéuih hīng-hīng-sūng-sūng gói saai dī gyún 7 Jūk léih seuhn-seuhn-leih-leih ló dóu hohk-wái 8 Dáng ngóh chèuhng-chèuhng-sai-sai gáaisīk béi léih tēng

Exercise 4.3 1f 2e 3g 4b 5d 6a 7h 8c 9j 10i

Exercise 4.4 1 Kéuihdeih chān-chān-maht-maht, yīn-yīn-ngahn-ngahn 2 Gó go làahmyán sàhn-sàhn-bei-bei, gwái-gwái-syú-syú 3 Ngóh lóuhgūng sìhng-sìhng-saht-saht, táan-táan-baahk-baahk 4 Nī go jokgā sé ge yéh hūng-hūng-duhng-duhng, kèih-kèih-gwaai-gwaai 5 Kéuih go yéung yìhm-yìhm-sūk-sūk, láahng-láahng-ngouh-ngouh 6 Gāan ūk gōn-gōn-jehng-jehng, jíng-jíng-chàih-chàih 7 Léih go léuih-pàhngyáuh sī-sī-màhn-màhn, daaih-daaih-fōng-fōng 8 Kéuih gāan seuihfóng syū-syū-fuhk-fuhk, hōi-hōi-yèuhng-yèuhng 9 Léih go beisyū mā-mā-fū-fū, fùh-fùh-lūk-lūk 10 Ngóh sailóu gú-gú-waahk-waahk, gwái-gwái-máh-máh

Exercise 4.5 1i 2k 3a 4f 5h 6d 7m and b 8j and l 9g and c 10e and n

Unit 5 Word formation

Exercise 5.1 1g 2h 3j/i 4b 5a 6i 7c 8d 9e 10f

Exercise 5.2 1 yáuh-yiyih 2 móuh-lĩu 3 yáuh-mahntàih 4 móuh-loih-sihng 5 yáuh-bánmeih 6 móuh-lèuhngsām 7 yáuh-leih 8 móuh-yùhnjāk 9 yáuh-haahn 10 móuh-jaakyahm-gám

Exercise 5.3 1 Jūng Ngàhn (or Ngán) 2 Dahk Sáu 3 Máh Hòhng 4 A Sih 5 Sāi Seuih 6 Bāk Daaih 7 Deih Tit 8 Gong Dāng

Unit 6 Verb–Object compounds

Exercise 6.1 1 sihk-faahn/yéh 2 tiu-móuh 3 waahk-wá 4 sé-seun 5 béi-chín 6 chūng-lèuhng 7 fāan-hohk 8 kīng-gái 9 yàuh-séui 10 cheung-gō

Exercise 6.2 1 jyú-gán-faahn 2 faat-gán pèihhei 3 fong-jó-ga 4 duhk-gwo-syū 5 hàahng-yùhn-gūngsī 6 yám-gwo-jáu 7 háau-gwo-síh la 8 Dá-jó-dihnwá

†**Exercise 6.3** 1 Syū kéuih m̀h sīk gaau 2 Sīngkèih-yaht sīk dōu móuh dāk yāu 3 Syúga ngóhdeih ga dōu móuh dāk fong 4 Kéuih taaitáai jái yauh msái chau, gūng yauh msái fāan 5 Jái chìh-jóu dōu yiu sāang 6 Fēigēi yauh m̀h daap, chē yauh m̀h jā 7 Kéuih sāmchìhng m̀h hóu, faahn yauh m̀h sihk, gaau yauh m̀h fan 8 Léih seun yauh m̀h sé, dihnwá yauh m̀h dá 9 Kéuih jōng yauh m̀h fa, tàuh yauh m̀h chēui

Unit 7 Adjectives and stative verbs

Exercise 7.1 1 **Ngóh hóu dāamsām kéuih go behng** (his illness) 2 **Kéuih hóu sihnmouh léih dī jáiléui** (your children) 3 **Ngóh m̀h gēng gahtját ga** (of cockroaches) 4 **Kéuih làahm-pàhngyáu dahkbiht gánjēung kéuih ge gihnhōng** (her health) 5 **Kéuih séung chyun dī lēng-mūi-jái** (young girls) 6 **Léih suhk bīngo yīsāng a?** (which doctor) 7 **Ngóh m̀h jī kéuih mòhng mātyéh wo** (what) 8 **Hóu dō yàhn douhgeih ngóh gòhgō** (my elder brother)

Exercise 7.2 1 Kéuih jouh yùhn sáuseuht yìhgā leng fāan 2 Kéuih yìhchìhn leng-gwo 3 Léih hóuchíh leng-jó bo 4 Jeuk-jyuh gihn sān sāam, léih sèhng go leng saai 5 Ngóh mòhng màaih gām chi jē 6 Ngóh jeuigahn mòhng-jó 7 Ngóh gām lín meih mòhng-gwo 8 Ngóh hōichí mòhng fāan dī 9 Lī pàaih tīnhei lyúhn-jó 10 Yìhgā lyúhn fāan saai

Exercise 7.3 1 Ngóh hóu làahn tùhng kéuih hahpjok 2 Kéuih hóu yùhngyih lám dóu daapngon 3 Kéuihdeih hóu yùhngyih yèhng-jó m̄ chèuhng béichoi 4 Nī go yúhn-gín sailouhjái hóu làahn yuhng dóu 5 Kéuihdeih hóu yùhngyi béi yàhn ngāak 6 Chín hóu làahn múhnjūk yāt

go yàhn jānjing ge sēuiyiu 7 Yīgā ge tīnhei, go go dōu hóu yìhngyi sēungfūng 8 Dī yāmngohk hóu yùhngyi lihng ngóh lám fāan yíhchìhn ge sih 9 Léih yíhwàih ngóh hóu yùhngyi yīngsìhng yàhn jouh-yéh àh? 10 Lī júng yàhn hóu làahn hái nīdouh sāngchyùhn

Unit 8 Classifiers revisited

Exercise 8.1 1 **gāan séjihlàuh** 2 **jēun baahk-jáu** 3 **tou sāi-jōng** 4 **daahp sān syū/dēui sān syū** 5 **dī sósìh/chāu** (bunch) **sósìh** 6 **jēung sānfánjing** 7 **fūng gaaisiuh seun** 8 **dī hohksāang/bāan hohksāang** 9 **ga páau-chē** 10 **jek lìhnghā**

Exercise 8.2 1 Go-go hohksāang dōu jáu-jó 2 Tou-tou hei dōu hóu muhn 3 Tìuh-tìuh tàihmuhk dōu m̀h làahn 4 Jēung-jēung tói dōu béi yàhn dehng-jó 5 Ga-ga gēi dōu baau saai 6 Kéuih bún-bún syū dōu hóu hóu-maaih 7 Kéuih gihn-gihn sāam dōu hóu gwai 8 Hahp-hahp tóng dōu bāau dāk hóu leng 9 Ngóhdeih bún-bún syū dōu yiu tái 10 Ngóhdeih yeuhng-yeuhng dím-sām dōu giu-jó

Exercise 8.3 1d 2f 3b 4c 5a 6e

Unit 9 Topic and focus

Exercise 9.1 A: 1 Nī bún síusyut dī hohksāang meih tái-gwo 2 Go sai léui kéuih jeui sek 3 Gāan ūk kéuih hóu m̀h sé dāk maaih 4 Gúdín yāmngohk ngóh m̀h sīk yānséung 5 Kéuih ūkkéi yàhn ngóh hóu suhk B: 6 Ngóh gāmyaht ge sānmán m̀h dākhàahn tái 7 Ngóhdeih Yahtmán sīk síu-síu 8 Kéuih gongkàhm hohk-jó sāam lìhn 9 Kéuih gam làahn ge yéh m̀h wúih jouh 10 Léih wahnduhng yīnggōi dō dī jouh

Exercise 9.2 1 Ngóh lìhn jīpiu-bóu dou daai màaih làih 2 Kéuih lìhn yú dōu m̀h sīk jīng 3 Kéuihdeih lìhn Chín Séui Wāan dōu meih heui-gwo 4 Gíngchaat lìhn go yīsāng dōu m̀h seun 5 Kéuih lìhn ga chē dōu je béi ngóh 6 Ngóh gēng dou lìhn láahnghohn dōu bīu màaih 7 Kéuih lìhn go gúdúng fājēun dōu yiu maaih màaih 8 Ngóh lóuhgūng lìhn Chìuhjāu-wá dōu hohk màaih 9 Kéuih ngoh dou lìhn gaakyeh sung dōu sihk màaih 10 Lóuhbáan hāan dou lìhn láahnghei dōu m̀h hōi

Exercise 9.3 1 sīn 2 sīn 3 jauh 4 sīn 5 jauh 6 sīn 7 sīn 8 jauh

Unit 10 Using ***jēung***

Exercise 10.1 1 Ngóh jēung gūngfo gāau béi sīnsāang 2 Kéuih jēung go mahtmáh wuhn-jó 3 Ngóh jēung go wuhháu chéuisīu-jó 4 Ngóh séung jēung fūk wá gwa héi 5 Tīn-waih jēung go yahtkèih gói-jó 6 Kéuih jūngyī jēung gāan fóng jāp hóu 7 Ngóh yiu jēung dī syū ló fāan heui hohkhaauh 8 Mùihmúi jēung dī fā chaap hái fājēun douh 9 Kéuih jēung dī seun sāu-màaih saai 10 Lóuhbáan jēung dī chín chyùhn-jó yahp ngàhnhòhng

Exercise 10.2 1 Kéuih jēung gāan fóng maat dāk hóu gōnjehng 2 Gūngsī jāung go gachìhn gói-jó hóu dō chi 3 Ngóh jēung bún syū yàuh tàuh dou méih tái-jó léuhng chi 4 Kéuih jēung dī tàuhfaat jín dāk hóu dyún 5 Kéuih jēung fahn láihmaht sāu-màaih-jó léuhng yaht 6 Kéuih jēung tìuh yú jīng-jó sahp fānjūng 7 Dī gūngyàhn jēung chyùhn ūk yàuh-jó yāt chi 8 Ngóh jēung sáu gō fāanyihk-jó géi chi 9 Lóuhbáan jēung go gwónggou dāng-jó sāam yaht 10 Kéuih jēung go léui baahn dou hóu leng

Exercise 10.3 1 (Léih) jēung gihn sāam ló lohk làih ā 2 Ngóhdeih jēung dī laahpsaap dám-jó kéuih lā 3 (Léih) faai dī jēung dī gyún gói saai kéuih 4 Jīkhāk jēung go dihnchìh wuhn-jó kéuih 5 Faai-faai-cheui-cheui jēung gāan fóng jāp hóu kéuih 6 Chan yiht jēung dī Jūng yeuhk yám-jó kéuih 7 Jēung go syū bāau fong dāi hái deihhá 8 Jeui hóu jēung dī tàuhfaat dihn-jó kéuih 9 Jēung dī wūjōu sāam sái saai kéuih 10 Jēung gāan ūk jōngsāu hóu kéuih

Unit 11 Serial verbs

Exercise 11.1 1 Ngóh hóyíh *bōng* léih sé gaai-siuh seun 2 Léih yiu *yuhng* lihk dá go bō 3 *Bōng* ngóh gahm jūng ā 4 Léih *wán/yuhng* jek yauh sáu gahm-jyuh jēung jí lā 5 Chéng léih *yuhng* lóuh lám háh yéh 6 Kéuih móuh sìhgaan *doih* léih séuhng-tòhng 7 Ga páau chē *yuhng* làih béichoi ge 8 Léih yiu *yuhng* dō dī yìhm yip tìuh yú 9 Kéuih *wán/yuhng* jek geuk dóng-jyuh douh mùhn 10 Léih hó-m̀h-hóyíh *doih* ngóh mahnhauh kéuih a?

Exercise 11.2 1 **Dáng ngóh bōng léih hōi mùhn lā** Let me open the door for you 2 **Kéuih heung ngóh kàuhfān** He proposed to me 3 **Dī chānchīk doih kéuih gāau jōu** The relatives pay the rent on his behalf 4 **Yīsāng bōng ngóh hōi-dōu sāang-jái** The surgeon performed a Caesarean for me 5 **Gó go hohksāang gān ngóh hohk tiu-móuh** That student learns dancing with me 6 **Nī jēung hóibou yuhng làih syūnchyùhn gāan sān gūngsī** This poster is to publicize the new company 7 **Fuhmóuh waihjó jáiléui bok-mehng jaahn chín** Parents strive to earn money for their children's sake 8 **Ngóh dī tùhngsih dahng ngóh hōisām** My colleagues feel happy

for me 9 **Kéuih sèhngyaht deui-jyuh léih góng hàahmsāp siuwá** He always tells dirty jokes to my face 10 **Kéuih pùih ngóh tái yaht-lohk** He watches the sunset with me

Exercise 11.3 1 **Kéuih wáu jek geuk (làih) sóu paakjí** He uses his foot to count the beat 2 **A-Yīng yuhng sānsīn séuigwó (làih) jouh sāléut** Ying uses fresh fruit to make a salad 3 **Gaausauh béi sìhgaan ngóhdeih (heui) tóuleuhn tìuh tàihmuhk** The lecturer gave us time to discuss the topic 4 **Kéuihdeih heui leuhtsī-làuh baahn sáujuhk lèih-fān** They went to the solicitors to sign the papers for divorce 5 **Dī geijé làih Hēunggóng jouh fóngmahn** The reporters came to Hong Kong to do interviews 6 **Léih m̀h hóu yuhng sāp bou (heui) maat go gongkàhm** Don't use a wet cloth to wipe the piano 7 **Go behngyàhn múih go láihbaai dōu heui yīyún jouh gímchàh** The patient goes to the hospital every week to have a check-up 8 **Dī chānchīk làih ngóhdeih ūkkéi taam ngóh a-màh** The relatives came to our house to visit my grandmother 9 **Kéuih tēuijin ngóh heui daaih-hohk duhk yúhyìhn-hohk** He recommended me to go to the university to study linguistics 10 **Ngóh fuhmóuh làih ngóh sūkse wáu ngóh** My parents are coming to my hall of residence to find me

Unit 12 Aspect markers

Exercise 12.1 1 Ngóh yiu kāp-háh sānsīn hūng-hei 2 Ngóh sīnsāang chē-hōi ngóh fāan-gūng 3 Léih yiu jyuyi-háh léih ge gihnhōng 4 Ngóh jyuh-hōi līdàuh, m̀h séung būn 5 Ngóhdeih heui Hói-yèuhng Gūngyún wáan-háh 6 Léih gú-háh ngóh géi dō seui ā 7 Kéuih jā-hōi Yidaaihleih páau-chē 8 Léih yīnggōi gói-háh léih ge waaih jaahpgwaan 9 Kéuih jeuk-hōi mìhng-pàaih sāam 10 Ngóhdeih heui tòuhsyūgwún chāamgwūn-háh sìn

Exercise 12.2 1 Léih yiu lihn-háh lī sáu gō 2 Léih heui mahn-háh lā 3 Léih si-háh gihn sāam sīn 4 Ngóh yiu lám-háh sīn 5 Mgōi léih dáng-háh sīn lā 6 Ngóhdeih táu-háh sīn 7 Léih màhn-háh dī hēungséui ā 8 Faai dī maat-háh faai mihn lā

Exercise 12.3 1 Ga gēi yuhng léuhng yuhng jauh waaih-jó 2 Pīn mán gói léuhng gói jauh gói hóu la 3 Kéuih góng-góng-háh dihnwá, yáuh yàhn hāau-mùhn 4 Kéuih sihk-sihk-háh faahn dahtyìhn wàhn-jó 5 Kéuih sé-léuhng-sé jauh sé hóu la 6 Gihn baahk sēutsāam jeuk-léuhng-jeuk jauh wūjōu-jó 7 Go hohksāang séuhng-séuhng-háh tòhng fan-jeuhk-jó 8 Jēung chòhng fan-léuhng-fan jauh laahn-jó 9 Ngóhdeih jyuh-jyuh-háh, faatgok gāan ūk lauh séui 10 Síu-tàih-kàhm, kéuih lāai-léuhng-lāai jauh m̀h lāai

Exercise 12.4 1 Kéuih siu héi-séuhng-làih góján, go yéung hóu tìhm 2 Ngóh m̀h hóyíh joi ngàaih lohk-heui 3 Tīnhei jyun héi-séuhng-làih, hóu yùhngyih behng 4 Léihdeih joi chònh lohk-heui, ngóh janh giu gíngchaat làih 5 Seui-gúk chàh-héi-seui séuhng-làih, janh màhfàahn 6 Gám yéung aau lohk-heui móuh yuhng 7 Ngóhdeih kyutdihng m̀h dáng lohk-heui 8 Kéuih yāt chī-héi-sin séuhng-làih, māt dōu jouh dāk chēut 9 Kéuihdeih aai-héi-gāau séuhng-làih go-go dōu hóu mhōisām 10 Ngóh sé m̀h dóu lohk-heui

Exercise 12.5 1 Kéuih yauh dit chān 2 Ngóh láu chān jek geuk 3 Lohk-chān-yúh gāan ūk dōu wúih hóu sāp 4 Ngóh béi yàhn cháai chān 5 Go sailouhjái pūk chān 6 Kéuih yám-chān-jáu dōu jeui 7 Ngóhdeih béi taaiyèuhng saai chān 8 Kéuih háau-chān-síh dōu m̀h hahpgaak 9 Mhóu ngoh-chān go bìhbī 10 Kéuih tái chān gó tou hei dōu haam

Unit 13 Comparisons

Exercise 13.1 1 héi-kehk móuh bēi-kehk gam hóu-tái 2 hahtīn móuh dūngtīn gam chèuhng 3 yīsāng móuh wuhsih gam mòhng 4 Náuyeuk jitjau móuh Hēunggóng gam faai 5 lihksí-haih móuh jithohk-haih gam yùhngyih yahp 6 Wohnggok móuh Jīmsājéui gam bīk-yàhn

Exercise 13.2 A: 1 Dīksí dihng fóchē faai dī a? 2 Gātìhng dihng sihyihp juhngyiu dī a? 3 Jūng yeuhk dihng sāi yeuhk yáuh-haauh dī a? 4 Daap-fēigēi dihng daap-syùhn syūfuhk dī a? 5 Duhk-syū dihng jouh-yéh sānfú dī a? B: 6 Go léui yáuh-móuh go jái gam pa-cháu a? 7 Tái dihnsih yáuh-móuh hàahng-gūngsī gam sāai-sìhgaan a? 8 Seuhnghói yáuh-móuh Bākgīng gam yúhn a? 9 Jūngdaaih yáuh-móuh Góngdaaih gam yáuh-méng a? 10 fōwaahn pín yáuh-móuh húngbou pín gam chigīk a?

Exercise 13.3 1 Dī gāsī taai pèhng/pèhng dāk jaih/pèhng gwotàuh 2 Chau-jái taai-(gwo) sānfú/sānfú dāk jaih 3 Kéuih jyú ge sung taai hàahm/hàahm gwotàuh/hàahm dāk jaih 4 Yìuhgwán-ngohk taai chòuh/chòuh dāk jaih 5 Kéuih hàahng dou taai guih/guih dāk jaih 6 Hēunggóng bin dāk taai faai/faai dāk jaih 7 Jingfú taaidouh gihk douh/taai-gwo kèuhng-ngaahn 8 Kéuih làaih-láai taai làahn fuhksih 9 Ngóh ūkkéi ge mahntàih taai fūkjaahp 10 Sīnsāang góng ge yéh gihk douh sām-ou/taai-gwo sām-ou

*Unit 14 Resultative and causative sentences with **dou***

Exercise 14.1 A: 1 **hōisām dou fan m̀h jeuhk** so happy that (she) can't sleep 2 **gēng dou m̀h gám fāan ūkkéi** so scared that (he) dared not go

home 3 **lāu dou paak tòih paak dang** so angry that (he) banged the table and chair 4 **mángjáng dou lyún gam laauh yàhn** so frustrated that (he) scolded people indiscriminately 5 **syūfuhk dou fau-jeuhk-jó** so comfortable that (she) fell asleep B: 1 **Go hói-gíng leng dou wàhn** The sea view is breathtakingly beautiful 2 **Gāan ūk gōnjehng dou fēi héi** The house is so devastatingly clean 3 **Fūk wá daaih dou móuh yàhn seun** The picture is incredibly big 4 **Hēunggóng hahtīn yiht dou díug-m̀h-seuhn** Hong Kong summer is unbearably hot 5 **Kéuih dī chín dō dou sái m̀h saai** He has more money than he can spend (Note: the sentences can all be left as they stand, as in **Kéuih dī chín dō dou ā . . .** He has so much money.)

Exercise 14.2 1 **Nī jek yeuhk lìhng dou léih yuht làih yuht leng** This medicine will make you look better and better 2 **Ngóhdeih ge jéungbán dō dou yàhn yàhn yáuh fán** Our prizes are so many that there's something for everyone 3 **Nī go jitmuhk jīngchói dou léih m̀h seun** This programme is unbelievably brilliant 4 **Ngóhdeih jáulàuh ge dím-sām sihk dou léih lém-lém-leih** Our restaurant's dim sum will make your mouth water (*lit.* lick your tongue) 5 **Sung fūyàhn dī syū maaih dou tyúhn saai síh** Madam Sung's books sell so well that all the copies are gone from the market

Exercise 14.3 1 **gwai dou haak séi léih** so expensive that it'll shock you 2 **chí dou mā-sāang yāt yeuhng** so much alike that they look like twins 3 **behng dou sihk m̀h lohk yéh** so sick that it can't eat 4 **yī dou msái sihk yeuhk dōu hóyíh fan dóu** cured to the extent that he can sleep without medication 5 **johng dou chē-mùhn dōu laahn màaih** so damaged that the car door was broken 6 **hohk dou sīk góng siuwá** I've learnt Chinese to the point where I can tell jokes 7 **lāu dou dá laahn saai dī yéh** so angry that she broke everything 8 **mòhng dou hái sahtyihmsāt gwo yé** so busy that he spent the night in the laboratory

†**Exercise 14.4** 1 Fūng seun tái dou ngóh hóu lāu 2 Pīn mán sé dou ngóh ngāau saai tàuh 3 Jēun jáu yám dou kéuih jeui-jó 4 Go sahtyihm jouh dou ngóh jauhlèih chīsin 5 Jēung chòhng fan dou ngóh hóu msyūfuhk 6 Go dihnsih tái dou ngóh ngáahn fā 7 Gó dī gwái-gú tēng dou kéuih fan m̀h dóu 8 Nī dī yeuhk sihk dou kéuih wàhn-tòh-tòh

Unit 15 Quantification

Exercise 15.1 1 Kéuih mātyéh beimaht dōu jī ge 2 Gāan-gāan gūngsī dōu móuh sīusīk 3 Ngóh go go jih dōu m̀h sīk duhk 4 Ngóh fuhmóuh go go jáiléui dōu gam sek 5 Kéuih fún-fún sān chē dōu m̀h múhnyi 6 Lóuhbáan tìuh-tìuh sou dōu gai dāk hóu chīngchó 7 Kéuih go-go yuht dōu jéunsìh

gāau-jōu 8 Kéuih chi-chi dōu jāang-juh màaih-dāan 9 Só yáu ge gwai-bān dōu chóh saai háidouh 10 Só yáuh ge jyuyilihk dōu jaahpjūng hái léih douh

Exercise 15.2 1 Go-go sīgēi dōu yáuh tūnghàhng-jing 2 Jek-jek māau ngoh dōu jūngyi 3 Ngóhdeih gāan-gāan jáulàuh dōu heui-gwo/Gāan-gāan jáulàuh ngóhdeih dōu heui-gwo 4 Kéuih tìuh-tìuh tàihmuhk dōu sīk daap/ Tìuh-tìuh taihmuhk dou sīk daap 5 Ngóh jek-jek sáují dōu tung dou séi 6 Fūng-fūng seun dōu tái saai la 7 Fūk-fūk wá dōu hóu yáuh-yisī 8 Sáu-sáu gō dōu hóu ngāam-tēng 9 Pō-pō syuh dōu yáuh jeukjái jyuh ge 10 Dihp-dihp choi dōu hóu hēung

Exercise 15.3 1 Léih yiu dō dī tùhng jáiléui kīng-gá/Léih yiu tùhng jáiléui dō dī kīng-gái 2 Ngóhdeih chéng dō-jó yāt wàih tói ge yàhn 3 Gāmyaht làih síu-jó go gúdūng 4 Léih hó-m̀h-hóyíh góng síu dī, jouh dō dī a? 5 Léih jeui hóu síu dī dá màh-jéuk/Léih jeui hóu dá síu dī màh-jéuk 6 Chéng léih dō dī gwāansām háh ūkkéi yàhn 7 Ngóh séung dō dī làuh hái ūkkéi yāusīk háh *or* Ngóh séung làuh dō dī hái ūkkéi yāusīk háh 8 Jeuigahn sihk síu-jó Sāigung dī hōisīn 9 Hēunggóng gām lín syúga dó-jó hóu dō yàuh-haak 10 Gāan ūk dō-jó (yāt) go fóng, síu-jó (yāt) go gūngyàhn

Exercise 15.4 1 saai 2 saai 3 màaih 4 màaih 5 màaih 6 saai 7 màaih 8 saai 9 saai 10 màaih

Unit 16 Negative sentences

Exercise 16.1 1 Kéuih m̀h/móuh joi tái gó go yīsāng 2 Léih mhóu joi ngāak jihgéi 3 Nī gihn sih m̀h hóyíh joi tō lohk-heui 4 Mhóu joi gam yáih lā 5 Kéuih go sēungháu m̀h joi tung 6 Kéuih gāmyaht móuh joi faat pèihhei 7 Léih msái joi gáaisīk 8 Ngóhdeih msái joi jiugu kéuihdeih

Exercise 16.2 1 Máih/mhóu sāu-sin jyuh lā 2 Ngóh m̀h/móuh dásyun būn ūk jyuh 3 Mhóu sāu màaih fūng seun jyuh (lā) 4 Ngóhdeih meih/m̀h heui dāk jyuh 5 Mhóu faht go hohksāang jyuh (lā) 6 Mhóu dá hōi dī láihmaht jyuh (lā) 7 Máih/mhóu séuhng chòhng fan-gaau jyuh lā 8 Kéuih meih wán dóu gūng jyuh 9 Léih m̀h yīnggōi fonghei jyuh 10 Ngóh msái hohk Póutūngwá jyuh

Exercise 16.3 1 Ngóh móuh mātyéh/géi dō gāp sih 2 Léih gāmyaht yáuh-móuh heui bīndouh máaih-sung a? 3 Hói-gwāan m̀h wúih dím (yéung) chàh léih ge 4 Yùhgwó léih móuh mātyéh mahntàih, ngóhdeih yìhgā hóyíh chīm yeuk 5 Lóuhbáan m̀h wúih dím (yéung) laauh léih ge 6 Yùhgwó yáuh mātyéh tàuhsou, hóyíh dá lī go lāmbá 7 Kéuih yáuh-móuh bīngo/

mātyéh chānchīk hóyíh jiugu kéuih ga? 8 Yùhgwó léih heui bīndouh léuih-hàhng, geidāk daai màaih ngóh heui 9 Ngóhdeih móuh géi dō/mātyéh chín sái 10 Móuh mātyéh/géi dō yàhn làih taam ngóh

Unit 17 Questions and answers

Exercise 17.1 A: 1 Léih séung jouh yaht-gāang dihng yeh-gāang a? 2 Léih séung gām-lín dihng chēut-lín fong-ga a? 3 Léih séung tēng gúdín yām ngohk) dihng làuhhàhng yāmngohk a? 4 Léih séung tái Jūng-yī dihng sāi-yī a? 5 Léih séung jyuh sīgā yīyún dihng gūnglahp yīyún a? B: 6 Léih yāthaih jīkhāak gāau jōu yāthaih jīkhāak būn jáu 7 Léih yāthaih duhk màhn-fō yāthaih duhk léih-fō 8 Léih yāthaih tùhng ngóh yātchàih heui yāthaih jihgéi heui 9 Léih yāthaih chéng gūngyàhn chau-jái yāthaih jihgéi chau 10 Léih yāthaih tàih jóu teuiyāu yāthaih jyun part-time

Exercise 17.2 1 **Haih a (móuh wah wo)** No (he didn't)/**Mhaih ak (yáuh wah ngóh jī)** Yes, he did tell me 2 **Haih a (msái)** No (I don't)/**Mhaih ak (yáuh sìh dōu yiu ga)** Yes (I do sometimes) 3 **Haih a (móuh heui)** No (I didn't)/**Mhaih ak (ngóh yáuh heui)** Yes, (I did) 4 **Haih a (móuh saai la)** No (there isn't)/**Mhaih ak (juhng yáuh síu-síu)** Yes, (there's still a little) 5 **Haih a (móuh wo)** No (I don't)/**Mhaih ak (ngóh yáuh)** Yes, (I do) 6 **Haih a (msái)** No (I don't)/**Mhaih ak (yiu)** Yes, (I have to) 7 **Haih a (juhng meih yáuh)** No, not yet/**Mhaih ak (yáuh yāt go lèih-gán)** Yes, they do, they have one on the way 8 **Haih a (m̀h háng a)** No (he won't)/**Mhaih ak, (kéuih háng)** Yes, he will

Exercise 17.3 1 Ngóh dím tēng dóu a? / Ngóh bīndouh tēng dóu a? / Ngóh tēng-gwái-dóu àh? 2 Bīngo bōng kéuih jēk? / Gwái bōng kéuih mē? 3 Ngóh géisìh yáuh ngāak-gwo léih a? / Ngóh bīn/gwai yáuh ngāak-gwo léih a? 4 Ngóhdeih gāmyaht dím jouh dāk saai a? / Ngóhdeih bīndouh jouh dāk saai a? 5 Sái māt kéuih gaau ngóh a? / Bīn/gwai sái kéuih gaau ngóh a? 6 Léih sái māt gam hóu sām a? / Gwái sái léih gam hóu sām àh?

Unit 18 Relative clauses

Exercise 18.1 1 **Tàuhsīn dá-dihnwá làih gó go deihcháan gīnggéi** That estate agent who just called 2 **Chìh-jó-jīk gó go wuihgaisī** The accountant who has resigned 3 **Yíng-gán-séung gó dī geijé** Those reporters who are taking pictures 4 **Sātjūng-jó sāam yaht gó jek gáu** The dog that went missing for three days 5 **Jouh-gán sahtyihm gó dī hohksāang** The students who are doing experiments 6 **Chēut-jó yún gó go behngyàhn** The patient who has got out of the hospital 7 **Yātchàih yìhn-gau lī go mahntàih gó dī**

jyūn-gā The specialists who are studying this problem together 8 **Taam-gwo ngóh géi chi gó go pàhngyáuh** The friend who has visited me a few times 9 **Johng chān jek māau gó ga chē** The car which has bumped into a cat 10 **Bōng kéuih hōi-dōu gó go yīsāng** The surgeon who has done the operation for him

Exercise 18.2 1 Siht-jó hóu dō chín gó gāan gūngsī jāp-jó-lāp 2 Ngóh chàhmyaht johng dóu gó go làahmyán haih ngóh lóuhbáan 3 Kéuih sèhngyaht daai-jyuh gó jek bīu hóu leng 4 Ngóhdeih taam-gwo yāt chi gó dī gaausauh haih Méihgwok-yàhn 5 Ngóh yuhng-gán gó go dihnlóuh taai gauh 6 Ngóh sé-jó gó géi fūng seun mgin-jó 7 Ngóhdeih máaih-jó gó dī Gwóngdūng-wá syū hóu gwai 8 Léih jūngyi tái gó dī hei (dihnyíng) taai maahn la 9 Kéuihdeih yám-jó gó dī jáu hóu hēung 10 Kéuih sihk gó dī yeuhk hóu yáuh-haauh

Exercise 18.3 1 Ngóh tái-hōi gó go yīsāng haih Gimkìuh bātyihp ge 2 Kéuih dī jáiléui duhk gó gāan hohkhaauh sāu hóu gwai hohkfai 3 Kéuih jyú gó dī sung móuh lohk yìhm 4 Ngóh chéng gó dī yàhn-haak chyùhn-bouh lèih chàih saai 5 Chìh dou gó dī hohksāang hóyíh chóh hái hauhbihn 6 Syūnbou yihpjīk hóu gó dī gūngsī jeuigahn kòhng sīng 7 Ngāam-ngāam máaih gó go gongkàhm yàuh Dākgwok wahn dou 8 Go jái waahk gó dī wá hóyíh sung béi yàhn 9 Lóuhbáan chéng gó go beisyū meih chìh dou gwo 10 Ngóh jūngyi gó dī síusyut dōsou móuh bouhlihk ge

Exercise 18.4 1 **Kéuih gei béi ngóh gó go bāau-gwó chúhng dou līng m̀h héi** The parcel he sent me is so heavy that I can't lift it 2 **Léih tēuijin gó go hohksāang háau-sìh chēut-māau** The student you recommended cheated in the exam 3 **Léih gaaisiuh làih gūngsī jouh-yé gó go tùhngsih haih ngóh gauh tùhnghohk** The colleague you introduced to work in our company is an old classmate of mine 4 **Chàhmyaht tái-jó gó tou hei ge jyúgok haih ngóh ge muhng jūng chìhngyàhn** The film I saw yesterday, the star of that film is my dream lover 5 **Go-go jaan (kéuih) dākyi gó go sailouh haih wahnhyut-yìh** The child that everyone praises for being pretty is mixed-race 6 **Ngóhdeih syún-jó (kéuih) jouh yíhyùhn gó go leuhtsī m̀h jéun heui Bākgīng** The lawyer we elected to be legislator is not allowed to go to Beijing 7 **Ngóh dehng-jó gó bún sān syū yuhng làih jouh chāamháau** The new book I ordered is used for reference 8 **Kéuih wán dóu gó dī yeuhk yiu hūng-tóuh sihk ge** The medicine he found needs to be taken on an empty stomach 9 **Ngóh sung jek gaaijí béi kéuih gó go léuihjái haih ngóh meih-fān-chāi** The girl I gave a ring to is my fiancée 10 **Ngóh mùihmúi tùhng kéuih paak-tō gó go yīsāng làih sihk-faahn** The doctor my sister is dating is coming to dinner

Unit 19 Subordinate clauses

Exercise 19.1 1 daahnhaih 2 dōu 3 jīchìhn 4 jīhauh 5 jīchìhn 6 mòuhleuhn 7 jīhauh 8 mòuhleuhn 9 dōng 10 yānwaih 11 gójahnsí 12 mòuhleuhn

Exercise 19.2 1 jihchùhng . . . jīhauh 2 dōng . . . ge sìhhauh/gójahnsí 3 yānwaih . . . sóyíh 4 gójahnsí 5 chèuihjó . . . jī-ngoih, juhng 6 meih . . . jīchìhn 7 sēuiyìhn . . . daahnhaih 8 mòuhleuhn . . . dōu 9 jihchùhng . . . jīhauh 10 sēuiyìhn . . . daahnhaih

Exercise 19.3 1g 2a 3c 4b 5f 6e 7h 8d

Unit 20 Conditional sentences

Exercise 20.1 (Note that in most cases the conjunctions are optional.) 1 (Yùhgwó) léih m̀h hahpgaak, ngóh jauh wúih hóu sātmohng 2 (Yùhgwó) léih chóh háidouh, (léih jauh) wúih syūfuhk dī 3 (Yùhgwó) yáuh mātyéh sān líu, (jauh) geijyuh wán ngóh gòhgō 4 Kéuih (yùhgwó) haih jān pàhngyáuh, (kéuih) jauh wúih mòuh tìuhgín bōng léih 5 Léih (yùhgwó) juhng m̀h sāu-sin, ngóh (jauh) sāu-sin 6 (Yùhgwó) léih bou-gíng, ngóhdeih jauh séi ngaahng 7 Ngóh (yùhgwó) m̀h daai ngáahn-géng, yehmáahn (jauh) tái m̀h dóu louh páai 8 (Yùhgwó) léih kàhnlihk dī, (jauh) yātdihng hóyíh háau dóu hóu hohkhaauh

Exercise 20.2 1a jauhsyun . . . dōu b chèuihfēi . . . yùhgwó mhaih 2a yùhgwó . . . jauh b yùhgwó . . . sīn 3a jauhsyun . . . dōu b chèuihfēi . . . yùhgwó mhaih 4a jíyiu . . . jauh b yùhgwó . . . jauh 5a chèuihfēi . . . yùhgwó mhaih b jauhsyun . . . dōu 6a jíyiu . . . jauh b yùhgwó . . . sīn 7a chèuihfēi . . . yùhgwó mhaih b jauhsyun . . . dōu 8a yùhgwó . . . sīn b jíyiu . . . jauh

Exercise 20.3 1a Ngóh yuht làih yuht gēng b Ngóh yuht lám yuht gēng 2a Ngóh yuht làih yuht gwa-jyuh kéuih b Ngóh yuht gwa-jyuh kéuih, yuht séung gin kéuih 3a Kéuih go léui yuht làih yuht leng wo b Kéuih go léui yuht daaih yuht leng wo 4a Ngóh yuht làih yuht jūngyi lī sáu gō b Ngóh yuht tēng lī sáu gō yuht jūngyi/Lī sáu gō ngóh yuht tēng yuht jūngyi 5a Gihn sih yuht làih yuht làahn gáaikyut b Gihn sih yuht tō lohk heui yuht làahn gáaikyut

Unit 21 Reported speech

Exercise 21.1 1 **Mùihmúi wah (kéuih) móuh chín la (wóh)** Little sister says she's out of money 2 **Sīnsāang wah ngóhdeih jáu dāk ga la (wóh)** The teacher said it's alright for us to leave 3 **Gíngchaat wah (kéuihdeih) wán-gán jing-yàhn (wóh)** The police said they're looking for witnesses 4 **Leuhtsī wah ngóh yiu faai dī chīm-mēng (wóh)** The solicitor said you had to sign quickly 5 **Yīsāng wah ngóh m̀h yīnggōi sihk tìhm yéh (wóh)** The doctor said I should not eat sweet things 6 **Pòhpó wah kéuihdeih m̀h sīk louh fāan ūkkéi (wóh)** Grandma said they couldn't find their way home 7 **A-Yī wah (kéuih) máaih-jó láihmaht béi ngóh dī jáiléui (wóh)** Aunty said she had bought some gifts for us 8 **Go léui wah (kéuih) yiu heui sāangyaht-wúi (wóh)** My daughter says she has to go to a birthday party 9 **Bōsí wah gūngsī gām lín m̀h gā yàhn-gūng (wóh)** The boss said there'd be no pay rise this year 10 **Ngóh taai-táai wah gām jīu yáuh geijé wán ngóh (wóh)** My wife said there were reporters looking for me this morning

Exercise 21.2 1 A-mā mahn kéuihdeih géisìh bātyihp wóh 2 Mìhng-jái mahn ngóh jūng-m̀h-jūngyi tái hei wóh 3 Dī hohksāang mahn ngóh lóuhgūng haih-m̀h-haih Yīnggwok-yàhn wóh 4 A-Sīn mahn ngóh séung-m̀h-séung làuh hái Hēunggóng wóh 5 A-Dāk mahn mātyéh haih ngóhdeih sìhnggūng ge beikyut wóh 6 Yīsāng mahn dímgáai ngóh gam gihnhōng wóh 7 Go beisyū mahn ngóh jouh māt gam hīngfáhn wóh 8 Sī gaausauh mahn ngóh gokdāk bīngo jeui yáuh chìhmjāt wóh 9 Dī chānchīk mahn ngohdeih dī jáiléui góng Jūngmán dihng Yīngmán wóh 10 Go tùhngsih mahn dím sīn hóyíh máaih dóu lī go yúhn-gín wóh

Exercise 21.3 1 **Ngóh pàhngyáuh giu/hyun ngóh mhóu gam sēungsām lā!** My friend asked/urged me not to be so sad 2 **Sīnsāang giu ngóhdeih jīkhāak tìhng bāt** The teacher told us to stop writing immediately 3 **Go tùhngsih giu kéuih bōng-sáu** The colleague asked him to help 4 **Gíngchaat mihnglihng ngóh jīkhāak fong dāi bá chēung** The police ordered me to put down the gun immediately 5 **Jyūn-gā gin-yíh ngóh maahn-máan dáng háh sīn** Experts suggest that I should wait patiently 6 **Yīsāng hyun ngóh faai dī gaai yīn** The doctor urged me to give up smoking quickly 7 **Lóuhpòh giu ngóh mhóu gam yeh fāan ūkkéi (wóh)** My wife asked me not to come home so late 8 **Go tùhnghohk hyun ngóh yiu hóu hóu bóujuhng sāntái** My classmate urged me to take care of my health 9 **Go leuhtsī gin-yíh ngóh jīkhāak faat fāng leuhtsī seun béi go jōuhaak** The lawyer suggested that I should send a legal letter to the tenant 10 **Ngoh lóuhgūng giu ngóh pùih kéuih chēut heui sihk-faahn** My husband asked me to go out to dinner with him

Unit 22 Cantonese speech conventions

Exercise 22.1 1 lóuhbáan 2 sīfú 3 sīgēi 4 Wòhng Táai 5 Faat-jái 6 a-pòh

Exercise 22.2 1 **Māt gam āam a!** What a coincidence! 2 **Sānfān faailohk** Congratulations! (*lit.* newly wed happiness) 3 **Gūnghéi saai wo, go bìhbī gam dākyi.** Congratulations, the baby is so sweet 4 **Sāangyaht faailohk** Happy birthday 5 **Singdaan faailohk** (Wish you) Merry Christmas 6 **Jūk léih léuihtòuh yuhfaai** (Wish you) have a pleasant journey 7 **Jūk léih jóu yaht hōngfuhk** (formal)/**Junk léih faai dī hóu fāau** (informal) (Wish you) get well soon 8 **Yám sing (kéuih)** Bottoms up 9 **Gūnghéi faat chòih** (*lit.* congratulations, make money) Happy (Chinese) New Year 10 **Jūk léih yāt louh seuhn fūng** (Wish you) have a smooth journey (by air or sea)

Exercise 22.3 1 lī go/wái (haih) ngóh tùhngsih, (giu a-Cream) 2 lī wái haih Máh yīsāang 3 lī wái (haih) Yihp gaausauh 4 lī go (haih) ngóh tùhng-hohk 5 lī wái (haih) ngóh taai-táai 6 lī go (haih) ngóh go chìhn-fū 7 lī go (haai) ngóh go daaih jái 8 lī go (haai) ngóh go chìhn-douh léuih-yáuh 9 lī go (haai) ngóh yīhchìhn ge hohksāng 10 lī go (haai) ngóh lóuhgūng/sīnsāang

Unit 23 Particles and interjections

Exercise 23.1 1 lō/āma 2 gwa 3 lō/āma 4 lō/āma 5 gwa 6 gwa 7 lō/āma 8 lō/āma

Exercise 23.2 1 há 2 hó 3 hó 4 há 5 hó 6 há 7 hó 8 há

Exercise 23.3 1 chē 2 baih/séi la 3 yí 4 wa(háai) 5 chōi 6 óh

Unit 24 Colloquial syntax

Exercise 24.1 1 Maaih-jó meih a, *gāan ūk*? 2 Léihdeih yātchàih heui lā, *bātyùh* 3 Ngóh chìh dou yānwaih sāk-chē a, *Sījísāan Seuihdouh* 4 Ngóh béi léih haak séi la, *jānhaih* 5 Léih yātdihng wúih lám dóu baahnfaat ge, ***ngóh jī*** 6 Juhng yáuh sìhgaan, maahn-máan góng lohk-heui ā, ***hóyíh*** 7 Léih tàih jóu teuiyāu mē, *wúih*? 8 Léih síusām jā-chē a, *gei-jyuh*

Exercise 24.2 1 tìuh 2 gauh 3 jek 4 tìuh 5 gihn 6 yéh 7 jek 8 lāp

Exercise 24.3 1 Tou hei hóu gwái muhn 2 Bīn-gwái-go háidouh chòuh a? 3 Fai-gwái-sih heui la 4 Ga chē maaih-gwái-jó la 5 Léih heui-jó bīn-

gwái-douh a? 6 Gam gwái chèuhng-hei ga! 7 Bīngo ga chē jó-gwái-jyuh saai a?/Bīn-gwai-go ga chē jó-jyuh saai a? 8 Ngóh m̀h gwái lōu la!

Unit 25 Code-mixing and loanwords

Exercise 25.1 1 Léih *call-jó* yīsāng meih a? 2 Faai dī *set fāan* ngāam go mahtmáh lā 3 Kéuih haih-maih *short-jó* a? 4 Jingfú *review-gán* lī go policy 5 Ngóh tùhng kéuih *swap-jó* 6 Ngóh *date-gwo* kéuih géi chi 7 Léih jēung cheque yíhgīng *clear-jó* 8 Kéuih ngāam-ngāam *quit-jó* fahn gūng 9 Bātyùh léih *send fāan* làih béi ngóh lā 10 Gūngsī yìhgā *promote-gán* lī géi jek sān product

Exercise 25.2 1 **Kéuih tùhng léih friend-m̀h-friend (fēn-m̀h-fēn) a?** Are you and he friendly? 2 **Léih pre-m̀h-predict dóu ngóh sénng dím a?** Can you predict how I want it? 3 **Kéuihdeih jeuigahn bī-m̀h-bīsìh a?** Have they been busy lately? 4 **Lóuhbáan in-m̀h-invite dī client heui dá golf a?** Will the boss invite the clients to play golf? 5 **Léih en-m̀h-enjoy tái kéuih dī e-mail a?** Do you enjoy reading his e-mail? 6 **Lóuhbáan tái yùhn go report, im-m̀h-impress a?** When the boss finished reading the report, was he impressed? 7 **Go exam ea-m̀h-easy a?** Was the exam easy? 8 **Kéuih béi fān fair-m̀h-fair a?** Is he fair in marking? 9 **Go show en-m̀h-entertaining a?** Was the show entertaining? 10 **Kéuih de-m̀h-delete go file a?** Will he delete the file?

Exercise 25.3 1 **fāailóu** = file 2 **gafē-sīk** = brown (*lit.* coffee colour) 3 **jēléi** = jelly 4 **wēnjái** = van 5 **sāammàhu-yú** = salmon (fish) 6 **lūmbá** = number 7 **sāléut** = salad 8 **jīsí** = cheese 9 **yiusō** = insurance 10 **jāudá-yú-tōng** = chowder (fish soup)

GLOSSARY OF GRAMMATICAL TERMS

aspect a distinction between ways of describing an action or situation, such as the habitual aspect in **sihk-hōi sāi-chāan** 'to eat Western food regularly', and the delimitative aspect in **sihk-háh sāi-chāan** 'to eat Western food once in a while'.

attributive an adjective used to indicate an attribute, as in **cho ge táifaat** 'wrong views'.

causative a sentence type expressing how an event is caused to happen, as in 'he made me cry'.

changed tone a tone which differs from the citation tone, usually becoming the high rising tone as in the second syllable of **léuih-yán** 'woman'.

citation tone the tone used when a word is cited in isolation, e.g. when it is read from a written character.

concessive a type of sentence used to concede a point, as in 'although I am poor . . .' which concedes being poor.

contraction a case when two or more words are reduced, as when English 'it is' becomes 'it's', Cantonese **si yāt si** 'have a try' becomes **sí-si** (with change of tone).

coverb a verb which characteristically occurs together with another verb, like **tùhng** meaning 'with' or 'accompany(ing)'.

diphthong a sound combining two or more vowel sounds, e.g. **dōu** 'all', 'also' which begins with the sound of *o* and ends with *u*.

focus an element of the sentence which is stressed and represents new or important information, as in 'He asked ME (of all people)'.

indirect command a type of sentence which reports a command, e.g. 'He asked me to pay the bill'.

intransitive verb a verb used without an object, like the verb 'cry' in 'She's crying'.

minimal pair a pair of words, sentences, etc. differing in only one respect, e.g. **gāi** 'chicken' vs. **gāai** 'street' which differ only in the length of the diphthong.

palatalization a change in the sound of a consonant caused by contact between the tongue and the palate (the roof of the mouth).

predicative an adjective used to state a property of something, as in **Nī go táifaat cho ge** 'this view is wrong'.

quantification the area of meaning concerning expressions such as 'all', 'some', etc., which refer to relative quantities of things rather than to individual things.

reduplication grammatical pattern in which a word or syllable is repeated.

register a form of speech associated with a certain degree of formality, e.g. colloquial register.

reported speech those types of sentence which report what someone else has said, e.g. 'She says there's no time for that'.

serial verbs two or more verbs used in a series within the same clause as in 'Let's go and eat'.

subordinate a subordinate clause is not complete by itself but accompanies a main clause to which it is subordinate. For example, a clause beginning with 'although', as in 'Although we know little about this topic' is a subordinate clause, which must be followed by a main clause.

topicalization taking an element of a sentence and putting it in the first (or occasionally second) position, making it the 'topic' of the sentence, as in 'Oysters I can't eat'.

transitive verb a verb used with an object following it, like the verb 'push' in 'She's pushing the trolley'.

INDEX

ā particle 146
a particle 145, 158–159
a- prefix 13–14, 153
abbreviations 31–32
address, terms of 152–153
adjectives 41–43
  attributive 120
  comparison of
  with **dou** 90
  easy and difficult 43
  formation of 32–33
  formed with classifier 51
  intensification of 169
  reduplication of 21–24
  as verbs 41
adverbs 100
  dislocated 166
  formed by reduplication 14, 22–25
adversative 79
affricates 1,3
afterthoughts 84–85, 136, 166
àh particle 114–115, 159
āma particle 157–159
articles 46–47
aspect markers 36, 66–67, 74–79, 101, 172
  with adjectives 41
  continuative 78
  continuous 68–69
  with coverbs 66–67
  delimitative 74–76
  habitual 77, 79
  inchoative 77–78
  perfective 16, 41–42, 63
  progressive 77
auxiliary verbs 110
  dislocated 166

ba 61, 63
baby-talk 18, 25
béi
  in comparisons 83
béihéi
  in comparisons 84–85
bilinguals, bilinguality 172, 174
bīndouh 'where', 'anywhere' 98, 108–109, 116
  rhetorical use 116–117
bīngo 'who', 'anyone' 98–99, 108–109, 116, 123, 169

causative sentences 92–94
chān particle 79
changed tones 8, 13–18, 129
  due to contraction 16, 76
  high level 17–18
  high rising 13–16
chèuihfēi 'unless' 139–140
classifiers 46–52
  alternative 50
  as articles 46–47
  and changed tones 13, 15–17
  and code-mixing 173
  collective 49
  generic 49–50
  possessive 47
  in relative clause 121
  slang usages of 167
  verbal 52, 76, 167–168
code-mixing 172–174
colloquial language 42, 64
  syntax 165–169
comparative constructions
  comparison 42–43, 83–86, 101

compounds
adjective 32
adjective + classifier 51
with **gwái** 168
noun 29–31
and tone change 13–14
verb + object 35–38, 76
concessive sentences 127, 131–132, 139
conditional sentences 58, 109, 123, 127, 135–140, 166
counterfactual 137
hypothetical 137
necessary vs. sufficient 138
conjunction
in negative sentences 110
conjunctions 135–137, 139
double 127–132
consonants 3–5
contraction 16, 76
coverbs 66–67
in relative clauses 123

dāk 'only' 102–103
dāk potential 102, 103
definiteness 46–47
delimitative *see* aspect markers
demonstratives 47
dī
comparative 84
plural 47–48, 116, 121
dihng 'or' 113
diminutive 30
diphthongs 2
directional verbs 36
reduplication of 23
dislocation 166
dō 'many', 'much' 99–100
dō gwo 'more than' 83–84
dōu 97–99
in concessive sentences 132, 139
with habitual **chān** 79
with indefinite question words 109
with **lihn** 'even' 56–57
dou in resultative sentences 89–94, *116*

emphasis 38, 55–56, 90–91, 169
English
loanwords 172–175
excess 86, 99–100
exclamations 161–162

fāan particle 41, 173

focus, focusing 56–58, 98
future of Cantonese xi–xii

gam 'as', 'so' 169
in comparisons 85
ge 47, 120, 159–160
giu tell 145–146
gó 'that' 121
gójahnsìh 'then', 'when' 129–130
greetings 149–150
gwa particle 157–158
gwái the devil 117, 168–169
gwo
comparative 83–84, 86, 101

háh aspect marker 74–76
haih 'to be' 115
héi-séuhng-làih 'begin' 77–78
High Cantonese xiii
use of **jēung** in 62–63
hōi aspect marker 77
hóuchíh 'seem' 85
hypothetical meaning 137

imperatives 145–146
with **jēung** 63–64
indefinite question words 108–109
in relative clauses 123–124
indirect commands 145–146
indirect questions 116, 132, 145
indirect speech
see reported speech
interjections 161–162
introductions 150–151

Japanese loanwords 176
jauh 'then' 57–58, 123, 127, 135, 138
jauhsyun 'even if' 139
je particle 75, 103
jēk particle 156
jeuhn 'as . . . as possible' 85–86
jēung 61–64
jíyiu 138
jó aspect marker 16, 41–42, 63
joi *'again' 107–108*
juhng 'still' 131
jyuh aspect marker 69, 138

kéuih
in colloquial register 165–166
with **jēung** 63–64
in relative clauses 122–123
kinship terms 151–152

lā particle 146
la particle 160
làahn 'difficult' 43
language policy xii
léuhng 'two' 31, 76–77
lihn 'even' 38, 56–57
lō particle 156–157
loanwords 175–176
lohk-heui 'continue' 78

mātyéh 'what', 'anything' 98–99, 108–109, 116–117, 123
Mandarin 47, 61, 63, 76–78, 86, 120, 130, 136
màaih particle 41–43, 57, 97, 100–103
mē particle 114, 160
meih 'not yet' 107, 130
mhóu 'don't' 146
modifiers, modification 29, 36–37, 120
móuh
in comparisons 84
msái 'no need' 110
mtūng 114–115
múih 'each' 97–98

names 152–153
tone change in 13–14
negative comparisons 84
negative questions 115
negative sentences 106–110
nouns
and classifiers 15–17, 46–51
collective 31
countable 47
formation of 29–31
mass 47–48
numerals
with collective nouns 31
with **dāk** 102
with **dōu** 98

objects
in compounds 35–38
with **jēung** 61–64
and quantification 98
of stative verbs 42
topicalization of 55
occupational terms 153
onomatopeia 24–25

palatalization 3
particles 91, 156–160
passive 79–80

possession 47
potential construction 78, 101, 173
prefixes
a- 13–14, 153
prepositions 66
English 173
pretransitive *see* **jēung**
pronouns
dislocated 166
see also **kéuih**
purpose 70, 131

quantification 97–103
with **chān** 79
questions 109, 113–117
disjunctive 113–114
indirect 116, 132, 145
multiple 116
rhetorical 43, 110, 116–117, 169

reasons 128–129
reduplication 21–25
of adjectives 21–24, 42
of classifiers 48–49
forming adverbs 22–25
and tone change 14
of verbs 74–77
reflexive verbs 33
register xii–xiii, 62–63, 86, 165–169
relative clauses 77, 120–124
reported speech 70, 143–146
resultative sentences 89–94

saai particle 41–43, 100–102
sái 'need' 110, 117
sēuiyìhn 'although' 127–128, 131
sequence of actions 69, 131
serial verbs 61, 66–71, 127
similarity 85
sīn 'only', 'first' 57–58, 74, 108, 138
síu 'little' 99–100
síu gwo 'less than' 84
slang 167
sound changes 3–5
só yáuh ge 'all' 97–98
stative verbs 41–43
taking objects 42
subject
before topic 56
subordinate clauses 75, 127–132, 166
with **chān** 79
with **héi-séuhng-làih** 78

suffixes
  -fa 63
  -jái 153
  -lóu 29
superlative 85

taai 'too' 86
taboo words 154, 162
tìm particle 103
time clauses 129–131
tone 4, 8–11
  changed 8, 13–18
  contours 9–10
  entering 8
  in loanwords 173, 175
  merger 10–11
topic 55–56
topicalization 37–38, 55–56
  and relative clauses 121–122
tùhng 'with' 66
  in comparisons 85

verb copying 91–92
verb–object compounds 35–37
  with coverbs 66–67
  with **héi-séuhng-làih** 78
  inverted 39–40
verbs of motion 70
verbs of saying 143
verbs of thinking 144–145
vowels 1–3

waahkjé 'maybe', 'or' 114
waih-jó 'for' 66, 131
wo, wóh particle 144–146
word formation 29–33
word order 98, 165
written Chinese xiii, 120

yānwaih 'because' 127–128, 135
yāt 'one' 76
yāthaih 'either' 113–114
yiu 'need', 'want' 110
yùhgwó 'if' 127, 135–140
yùhngyih 'easy' 43
yuht 'the more' 140